The Decline of Sugar Production and the Rise of Cocoa Production in Grenada 1870-1917:
The Changing Fortunes of a Cocoa Peasantry

by

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(ABSTRACT)

Post-emancipation Grenada poses a unique situation in the agricultural milieu of the Caribbean. Grenada not only defied the norms of a mono-cultural existence, but experienced relative prosperity during a time of general depression. The colony's prosperity between 1870-1917 can be attributed to the agricultural transformation from large-scale sugar production to small-scale peasant cultivation of cocoa in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Much of the written history concerning post-emancipation society in the Caribbean has tended to underline the collective impoverishment following the decline of sugar production. Furthermore, studies have concentrated on the handicaps and inefficiencies associated with peasant agriculture. This thesis attempts to go beyond these broad generalizations of underdevelopment and examines how Grenada's agricultural transformation to cocoa initiated fundamental change in the countryside. This agricultural transformation to cocoa not only allowed Grenada to escape the disastrous consequences experienced by its neighbors, but gave rise to an independent peasantry. An evaluation of the resulting socioeconomic consequences will focus on how the cultivation of cocoa helped the peasantry improve their
situation, provided them with a greater sense of humility and most importantly contributed to the overall welfare of the colony.
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Chapter One: Introduction

I. Problem Statement

Post-emancipation Grenada poses a unique situation in the agricultural milieu of the Caribbean as it achieved relative prosperity during a time of general depression. Grenada's situation can be attributed to its agricultural transformation from large-scale sugar cultivation to small-scale peasant cultivation of cocoa. Grenada defied the norms of a mono-cultural existence and shed the bonds of a depressed West Indian sugar economy.

Most studies of post-emancipation society in the West Indies have underlined the collective impoverishment following the fall of "King Sugar". Scholars have pointed to the fall of the sugar plantation and its legacy of uneven trade as one of the main causes of poverty in the region (Beckford, 1972:183; Best, 1968:289). I contend that on Grenada the fall of sugar and the agricultural transformation to cocoa gave rise to a peasantry. Furthermore, the high level of peasant involvement in cultivation of cocoa enabled an independent peasantry to enjoy the material benefits of their labor.
This thesis will address how Grenada’s agricultural transformation to cocoa gave rise to a peasantry and allowed Grenada to escape the disastrous economic circumstances experienced by its neighbors. An evaluation of the resulting socioeconomic consequences of this transformation to cocoa will focus on how the peasantry improved their situation and contributed to the overall welfare of this British West Indian colony. The period 1870 to 1917 was chosen because it was a time when Grenadian farmers responded to external demand and West Indian cocoa consistently fetched high prices in the world market.

II. Physical Setting

Grenada is a tiny island in the eastern Caribbean located 75 miles southwest of St. Vincent and 85 miles north of Trinidad. It is situated just north of the twelfth parallel of Latitude and 61° west Longitude. Grenada’s total area is 120 square miles, with a span of 21 miles north to south and 11 miles east to west. The island is of volcanic origin thus giving way to a mountainous interior. The main mountain chain runs from north to south and bisects the island creating many ravines and waterfalls on both its Leeward and Windward sides. Its principal peak is Morne St.
Grenada’s rugged terrain creates distinct microclimates which vary according to height and location. Mountainous regions help create orographic precipitation which creates an atmosphere that is mostly cool and wet. The average temperature in highland areas is 71°F, while in the lowlands the average temperature is 86°F (Grenada Environmental Profile, 1991:5). Grenada receives about 4,060 mm of rainfall annually in the central mountainous districts, and approximately 1,270 mm in coastal locations (Grenada Environmental Profile, 1991:72). Grenada has a limited coastal plain resulting in only two principle lowland areas. These lowland areas are located on the southwestern part of the island (Point Salines) and in the north just east of the town of Sauteurs.

Grenada is divided into six administrative parishes: St. George’s, St. John’s, St. Mark’s, St. David’s, St. Andrew’s and St. Patrick’s (See Figure 1.1). Grenada has two dependencies, Carriacou and Petit Martinique, which are also considered to be separate administrative parishes. The port and main town of Grenada, St. George’s, is located within St. George’s parish. St. George’s, with its harbor sheltered
from the open sea, has always been the focal point of Grenada’s rural based economy.

III. Background

Columbus visited Grenada on his third voyage to the West Indies in 1498. However, the first attempt to establish a settlement was made by an English trading concern in 1608. Their attempt was short lived, and the French established a settlement in 1650. French colonists immediately commenced to cultivate tropical commodities and looked to Grenada with great anticipation for the accumulation of wealth that could be generated through trade. Grenada’s early development did not follow the path of a typical West Indian sugar island because its economic base was diversified; by 1700 sugar, tobacco, cotton, coffee and cocoa were all being grown (Brizan, 1984:26).

In the early 1700s, European countries became concerned with the accumulation of gold bullion, the ultimate goal of mercantilism, and moved aggressively to protect the perceived economic interests in their West Indian colonies. To protect their interests both France and England emphasized the need for exclusive trade with their respective colonies. In the 1750s hostilities broke out between these two colonial rivals during the Seven
Figure 1.1 Grenada and its Parishes
Years War in Europe. Grenada was not exempt from this conflict and after several British naval victories in the region, the French relinquished control of Grenada to the British in 1762 (Brizin, 1984:31). Grenada was ceded to England under the Ninth article of the Treaty of Paris. Under British rule the island became part of a federated unit consisting of Dominica, St. Vincent, the Grenadines, and Tobago.

The opening of these colonies to British subjects was looked upon favorably by those who had not been able to acquire land in colonies where land had been exploited. "The attraction was the presence of higher-yielding, pristine soils, on which sugar cane could be raised, and from which returns could be immense ..." (Watts, 1987:315). However, conditions of sale made it impossible for new colonists to establish large estates. Land was to be sold to British subjects only and in allotments no larger than 500 acres (Ragatz, 1928:115). In Grenada, the influx of new English colonists and the existence of the old French order created a tense socio-political atmosphere. This tension was intensified when the French assisted the North American colonies in 1776, bringing France and England back into strife. This war manifested itself on Grenadian soil in 1779, when French forces sailed into St. George's and proved
superior to the British. French control of Grenada was short-lived and by 1783, under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, the island was once again restored to the British.

British settlers were to transform Grenada's diversified agricultural base into one geared almost exclusively toward the production of sugar. Sugar plantations were money making enterprises and formed the basis for island society. In fact, during sugar's "Silver age" (Watts, 1987:292) the West Indian plantocracy often challenged the traditional wealth in the mother country (Ragatz, 1928:28). However, by the beginning of the nineteenth century the high price of West Indian sugar began to diminish the profits of British refiners. British Industrialists argued that the protected market and the use of slave labor were to blame for the high prices of West Indian sugar.

In 1833, the British government responded to these special interests by passing the Emancipation Act. Emancipation in Grenada was met by a tendency among slaves to move away from the plantation. This preference to be independent from the plantation caused labor shortages which increased the cost of sugar production. The flight of ex-
slaves from estates coupled with the equalization of import duties in 1846 made it increasingly difficult for planters to cling to their once prosperous economic base.

These problems were exacerbated in Grenada as large-scale plantations were constrained by the island’s mountainous interior, the exhaustion of soils and the lack of investment in technological innovations. The combination of these factors meant that Grenadian sugar was of poor quality and of high cost (Brizan, 1984:99; Beachey, 1957:61). Moreover, the extension of sugar cultivation in virgin territories in Cuba, Brazil and parts of Asia combined with the increasing supply of beet sugar from temperate areas increased the world sugar supply resulting in a dramatic decrease in competitive prices (Beachey, 1957:137). Britain was forced to open up its markets to foreign sugar, and the West Indies lost the advantage of its protected market (Williams, 1961:6). By the late nineteenth century the prosperity of West Indian sugar planters was at an impasse.

As the production of sugar decreased in Grenada, planters’ profits diminished. Plantations became burdened with debts and faced economic ruin. Economic decline in Grenada became increasingly apparent as many of the island’s sugar plantations lay abandoned or were neglected by as
early as the 1850's. The West Indian sugar economy lay in ruins. It was this adverse economic trend in the latter half of the nineteenth century that plagued much of the region and is relevant in explaining the rise of cocoa production in Grenada. Grenadian sugar planters responded to changing market conditions by planting their impoverished estates in cocoa. Cocoa was to be their salvation.

The cultivation of cocoa required a low level of technological inputs while fetching a high price in the British market. The value of cocoa increased dramatically during the nineteenth century due to processing innovations in Europe. The invention of the cacao press in 1828 and the resulting extraction of cocoa butter from the bean led to the expansion of products. The separation of the butter from the bean made cocoa more digestible and gave rise to popular demands for a wide variety of cocoa products (Wood and Lass, 1985:5). By the late 1800s cocoa grew to be a popular commodity.

Strapped for capital, Grenadian planters adopted a contract system to bring their fields into cocoa. Metayage was the contract system that allowed planters to cultivate cocoa at a low cost, while providing the metayer a stake in the colony’s resources. Former slaves planted a specified
area into cocoa and were paid either in kind, cash, or awarded land that was peripheral to the plantation. Many of the ex-slaves who were metayers invested their earning in land, thus giving rise to a peasantry with freehold tenure. In this regard the metayage system played a vital role in the growth of the peasantry. Metayage was the mechanism that would change Grenadian society forever.

Following the planters' lead the peasantry cultivated their land in cocoa. Peasant cocoa production proved to be essential to Grenada's economic welfare. The agricultural transformation allowed Grenada to withstand the adverse economic effects of the sugar depression. In this regard cocoa production not only transformed Grenada's agricultural base, but it also facilitated the growth of an independent peasantry. What was unique to the Grenadian experience was that the cocoa peasantry shared in the profits as the island achieved relative prosperity. It was the more equitable distribution of revenues among the peasantry in Grenada compared to elsewhere that helped create a viable small-farming sector in Grenada between 1870-1917.

IV. Methodology

The Carol Newman library with its adequate Caribbean section provided me with sufficient resources to commence my
research. The British Parliamentary Sessional papers allowed to me gain an understanding of the social, economic and political environment in both Grenada and England during the late nineteenth century. What was not available in the library, I was able to obtain through inter-library loan. I also conducted research at the Research Institute for the Study of Man in New York City during the spring of 1992.

In the Summer of 1992 I traveled to Grenada and Trinidad to complete my archival studies and to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of small-scale cocoa cultivation. While in Grenada I conducted extensive archival studies at Grenada’s Public Library, the Governor-General’s house, as well as at the Marryshow house, an extra-mural extension of the University of the West Indies. I also conducted fieldwork in the countryside of Grenada which consisted of familiarizing myself with all aspects of cocoa practices. I also conducted lengthy interviews with old farmers concentrating on qualitative information about cultural practices that have perished with time. In Trinidad, I conducted literature searches at the University of the West Indies in St. Augustine. I also visited the Stollmeyer Estate in Santa Cruz where I was able to observe a modern cocoa plantation in operation.
Although quantitative data for this time period are inconclusive, I was able to support my findings with qualitative evidence from the Royal West India Commission Reports of 1883, 1897, and 1939. I also relied on the Minutes of the Legislative Council, Colonial Office reports, Colonial Bluebooks 1880-1917, the Government Gazette and a series of Grenadian Handbooks.
Chapter Two

The Caribbean Peasantry,
Geographical Aspects
and
Perceptions toward Land in the British West Indies
Chapter Two. The Caribbean Peasantry, Geographical Aspects and Perceptions toward Land in the British West Indies

I. Introduction

This chapter seeks to explore the nature of the Caribbean peasantry, various geographical aspects of their land holdings, and their perceptions and relationships to land in the British West Indies. The highly stratified social setting in which peasants have emerged allows us to understand why many have sought to define their independence through the cultivation of land. Their development and more importantly their secondary position in the wider agrarian structure provides insight on how their perceptions toward land emerged and have influenced patterns of use. The purpose of this chapter is to focus on the intimate relationship between the Caribbean peasantry and land.

II. The Caribbean Peasantry: A discussion

Peasants have been described as "rural dimensions of old civilizations" (Marshall, 1985:1) that are tied to a specific cultural tradition. In fact, peasants are perceived as being part of a tradition that was in existence prior to the development of capitalist formations or the intrusion of colonial capital. However, the Caribbean peasantry are
distinctly different as their presence is a result of a specific capitalist formation, the plantation.

Although the plantation was not the first farming system introduced into the region it quickly came to dominate the landscape. The Caribbean plantation was a unit of agricultural production with a specific economic organization geared for the maximization of profits. It became an integrated part of the world economy and acted as an external production base for Europe. Richardson tells us that:

The term Caribbean "Plantation" is, strictly speaking, an abstraction because it describes a variety of land units that have grown, collapsed, and changed remarkably at different times over the centuries (1992a:41).

Nevertheless, Mintz explains that the plantation emerged in the Caribbean because plantation organization is necessary for agricultural development of a frontier. The Caribbean was one such frontier where there was a "combination of abundant land, scarce labor, and a less than totally effective occupance of conquered territory"(Mintz,1977:257). Hence, the development of plantation agriculture made African slavery a "solution" attuned to the times (Mintz,1977:257). To Europeans, Africa represented a large
infinite reservoir of easily coerced labor that could fulfill the labor requirements of West Indian plantations.

It was the almost total destruction of local Amerindian peoples prior to the establishment of plantation agriculture that precipitated the importation of African slaves in the British West Indies. Hence, the importation of Africans never allowed a peasantry to develop in the "traditional" sense. Local Amerindian ways of life were replaced by African transplants that were brought to the West Indies to fulfill the needs of European capital. Investigations of slave culture and kinship patterns reveal that African life on sugar estates did not foster a clearly defined uni-tribal culture than they were accustomed (Watts, 1987:202). Africans formed new families within their villages on estates and developed their own distinct 'Afro-Caribbean' culture patterned after encounters with both Europeans and different Africans. In this regard, Caribbean peasants are unlike their world counterparts as they did not emerge out of a traditional social grouping, but rather have struggled to define themselves as a culturally distinct group. As a result, Caribbean peasantries have no historic ties to tradition and sentiment to the land that they control (Marshall, 1968:1).
Sidney Mintz argues that the plantation fostered the development of a new social type in the Caribbean. He contends that the Caribbean peasantry must be considered to be "Reconstituted" because their very presence in the territories they occupy came as a consequence of world capitalist development. He argues that Caribbean peasants started their lives in a role other than a peasantry:

-- in slavery, as deserters, runaways, as plantation laborers, or whatever -- and being some kind of resistant response to an externally imposed regime (Mintz, 1974:132).

In this regard the Caribbean peasant "is an artifact of geography, economic history, and of the economic and political predominance of the industrial, colonial power" (Frucht, 1967:296). Africans were torn from societies that had not entered into the capitalist world and yet found themselves in settings that were profoundly capitalist (Mintz, 1974:155).

The Caribbean peasants are by no means a homogeneous group; economic and ethnic variations are found throughout the region. Our primary concern, however, is the "proto-peasantry", a social type that Mintz describes as having their origin in slavery. An important distinction is that the proto-peasants have gained their independence through emancipation. Although this group emerged in the confines of
the plantation slavery (Beckford, 1985:402), they should not be viewed as merely a cast off social product of the plantation but rather as a unique adaptation in its own right (Mintz, 1985a:134).

The planting of foodstuffs on provision grounds, a practice that was utilized by planters as a way of lowering production costs, actually formed the basis for an important peasant adaptation. African behavior on little garden plots completely contradicted the planters’ insistent claims that slaves were stupid lazy savages incapable of working intelligently for themselves (Mintz, 1985a:134). The cultivation of food crops allowed slaves to function in a new context. Slaves not only became producers of their own food but in some cases they also became providers of food for free populations.

It was as slaves that these Caribbean people learned to budget their own time, to judge soil quality, to select seed, to cultivate and harvest, to prepare foods for sale, and otherwise to make the proto-peasant sector successful (Mintz, 1985a:135).

Thus the cultivation of food crops during slavery helped Caribbean peoples form the skills and qualities that were to become useful in post-emancipation life and become essential for their independent existence.
The emancipation of slaves in 1838 in the British West Indies brought about a fundamental change to the socioeconomic landscape as many ex-slaves moved away from the plantation. This movement of ex-slaves resulted in the emergence of a newly formed peasantry. Mintz describes movement away from the plantation as a sociological phenomenon which represented "a mode of response to the plantation system and its connotations, and a mode of resistance to imposed styles of life" (Mintz, 1974:133). Clearly, Mintz is implying that the pattern of movement was a form of resistance to the brutal system of plantation slavery.

Another view given by Douglas Hall explains that the "flight" from the estates must be reconsidered. Hall’s historical micro-level analysis of plantation life in Jamaica reveals that movement from plantations came as a consequence of conflicts between planters and laborers following emancipation and not of burning recollections of brutalities suffered under slavery. (Hall, 1978:11). Hall’s argument is based on the premise that former slaves opted to stay on the estates after emancipation. He emphasizes the importance of their "attachment to their dwelling places and
to burial plots of their relatives and a sense of belonging to the 'Negro-house' community of the estate" (Hall, 1978:24).

Hall also argues that this emotional attachment to 'place' was disrupted by planters as they pursued policies that were designed to preserve their advantageous position. Planters pursued labor retention policies which resulted in little or no improvement in the laborers' condition which furthermore entrenched patterns of servitude. Hall illustrates that:

in order to continue in rent-free enjoyment, they were being called upon to surrender their newly acquired right to work when, at what, and for whom they chose (1978:17).

Mandle confirms Hall's findings and tells us that immediately following emancipation it was common for planters to manipulate legislation. These actions sometimes resulted "in a direct denial of freedom to the labor force" (1982:47). Francisco Scarano quotes Walter Rodney and maintains that former slaves left the estates:

not to run away from plantation labor, but to strengthen the bargaining position of labor in dealing with planter capital by putting the laborer in a position where one would be unafraid of the threat that one might be kicked out of the house (1989:69)

Nevertheless, the continued tendency of the planters to deny real freedom to the newly emancipated slaves hastened the
flight of the labor force from the plantation. Planter policies obviously stymied their newly found freedom, but "what is obvious is that freed people's choices were not predetermined by some essentialist character trait, cultural or racial, but evolved out of their struggle with the planter class..." (Holt, 1992:151). Thus the movement from the plantations created a peasantry who came to rely on their own internally generated labor power, capital and intuition and who learned to combine it with whatever resources available to define their independent existence (Beckford, 1984:58).

III. Geographic Aspects of Peasant land in the British West Indies

A characteristic of this conflict has been the tendency of the peasantry to acquire land. Hence, the movement away from the plantation was marked by an increase in small freeholds. Whether this tendency to acquire land came as a consequence of government policies or as a reaction to servitude one cannot say with any certainty, as it depended on the historical experience of particular colonies. In most cases the ability to acquire land depended on the nature of the plantation system, although factors such as population density, topography, and the amount of arable land have influenced the acquisition of land among the peasantry. In older colonies like Barbados, St. Kitts and
Antigua the sugar industry had left few, if any opportunities for the acquisition of land. On the other hand, in the Windwards the sugar industry had left undeveloped much of the mountainous interior (Marshall, 1985:4). Hence, where plantations have dominated the landscape, the accessibility of resources and opportunities necessary for peasant development were restricted.

This peasant/plantation competition (Beckford 1985:402) is useful for understanding how peasant settlements have emerged with distinct geographic patterns in regards to size, quality, and location. Plantation control of arable land circumscribed the development of the peasantry and placed them in a position where they were confined to small land holdings. Mintz (1974) tells us that the concept of independence among the peasantry is misleading as peasants rarely controlled adequate resources to utilize fully their labor power and could subsist only by selling their labor off the farm. For instance, according to the 1891 census for the island of Grenada the average peasant holding was 1.58 acres (Census, 1891). Almost a century later land distribution was still highly skewed in favor of large land holdings. In 1981, 95 percent of all farms were registered as being smaller than 4 hectares and controlled 8609 ha. or
62 percent of arable land. On average small farmers held 2.02 hectares of land. There appears to have been little improvement in the land holding situation as 5 percent of farmers controlled 38 percent of arable land (Brierley, 1988a:196). Recently, urban groups and Governments have become directly involved in agricultural production and in some cases have exacerbated this pattern of uneven land distribution (Rojas, 1984:51).

Due to the immediate obstacles against obtaining productive arable land, Caribbean peasants responded by constructing their holdings around the plantation system. Sugar plantations have tended to dominate coastal plains and interior lowland valleys; therefore peasant settlements have been restricted to land in sloping and marginal areas (Beckford, 1985:403). This adaptation was prevalent in mountainous Grenada where flat arable land was a scarce resource. Therefore, peasants have acquired holdings that tend to be shallow, hilly, rocky, inaccessible, and infertile, whereas plantation lands are usually flat and fertile. Consequently, throughout the British Caribbean peasant settlements tend to be confined to marginal land.

Mintz (1974) has called this pattern of settlement "The Highland Adaptation" and argues that there is a distinct
correlation between peasant settlements and particular physical environments. However, it was Richardson (1984) who made the distinction between "Highland" and "Lowland" peasant adaptations. For instance, post-emancipation peasant settlements in a relatively flat colony like Guyana tended to be clustered around abandoned coastal estates whereas in the mountainous Windwards peasant cultivation grounds were typically dispersed along a slope or strung out along a mountain spur (Mintz, 1974:235). Although there were different legal and institutional arrangements in these colonies, topography undoubtedly helped influence the pattern of settlement.

The scarcity of arable land prompted peasants to zealously acquire plots of land as they became available. As previously mentioned, peasant holdings were small and fragmented. Peasant holdings tend to be one to ten acres; and more often one than ten -- and owners cultivate several plots (Mintz, 1974:235). John Brierley, in his survey of land holdings in Grenada, found that it was common for peasants to own or cultivate several pieces of land. Farms were found to be divided into an average of 2.75 fragments of land and had a mean size of 0.73 ha. (Brierley, 1988b:71).
Fragmentation of peasant land holdings in the British Caribbean has precipitated different uses of land. Peasants have developed a distinct patterns of intense land use. Brierley indicates that on Grenada "intensity of land use declines with increases in distance from the farmer's house" (1988a:201). Peasants tend to cultivate food crops more intensely on their houseplots, whereas food crops were found to be less common on parcels away from the houseplot. Export crops are generally cultivated away from the houseplot and usually occupy the best land (Brierley, 1988a:201).

There are many variations in the patterns of land ownership and tenure among peasants in the British Caribbean. However, five types are particularly common. They are 1) squatting, 2) sharecropping, 3) cash tenancy or rent, 4) family or common property and 5) freehold ownership. Squatting was a common adaptation among early peasants. Although, this type of tenure is insecure it is still found throughout the Caribbean today. It only occurs among the most desperate peasants. Sharecropping is found where landholders do not have the capital or control over the land to cultivate land. Hence, peasants take responsibility for the land and the landholders receive payment in kind. Many peasants deem such work to be synonymous with plantation
labor, while others favor this arrangement as it may provide
them with a chance to acquire land. Cash tenancy is a more
common form of tenure among those who do not have the
capital to purchase land. However, peasants perceive this
type of tenure "...to be a modern equivalent of slavery"
(Brierley, 1974:94). Most land that was rented was located on
estate land. There are, however, instances in which land is
rented close to households when houseplots are not big
enough to provide basic subsistence. Family land is land
that is held by family members and transferred through
generations. This form of tenure is found throughout the
British Caribbean and represents a defensive arrangement in
which family members ensure that land purchased would not be
lost to outside forces (Thornburg, 1989:13). However,
freehold ownership is the most favorable type of tenure as
outright ownership is associated with independence from the
plantation regimen (Mintz, 1974:132).

IV. The Peasantry and Land

But why was the main implication of this struggle the
acquisition of land among the Caribbean peasantry? To the
newly formed peasantry freehold ownership provided security
against economic vicissitudes as well as social autonomy
against landlords (Lowenthal, 1961:4). Their concept of
freedom was autonomy and peasants sought to define this by investing in land whenever possible. To peasants, freedom was gained through the cultivation of land. Land helped peasants define their freedom in terms that were familiar. After all, land had been the most important resource in the West Indies. It was the cultivation of land that had dominated over all other economic activities. In this regard the growth of a peasantry and more importantly their quest for freehold ownership of land may be attributed to their close proximity to the capitalist economy. Mintz explains that:

A key assertion is the significance of land for Caribbean rural folk - a significance that exceeds any obvious economic considerations. The slaves sought desperately to express their individuality through the acquisition of wealth..." (1974:155).

Therefore, "emancipation was simultaneously an act of westernization and an act of resistance" (Mintz, 1974:155). Peasants who gained ownership of land began to produce commodities for sale as well as for their own subsistence (Mintz, 1974:141). Obviously, land represented economic security and self-expression for peasants in the wider agrarian structure.

Caribbean peasants ever since have perceived land to be a scarce resource in view of the dominance of the old
plantation order. This perception of land can be attributed to denial of control of resources during slavery as well as plantation dominance in the post-emancipation period (Besson, 1988:18). Nevertheless, the Caribbean peasantry have sought desperately to gain access to land, consolidate, and accumulate as much land as possible. The peasantry's behavior appears to be economically rational as they seek to gain control of an important resource which represents both economic independence and livelihood.

Yet the peasantry's relationship with the land goes far beyond any economic considerations. There is a "deeply felt attachment to the land...in all its aspects -- freedom, pride, status, continuity, solidarity, sovereignty..." (Lowenthal, 1961:4). Peasants acquired greater dignity and even self-conscious glory through freehold ownership of land and therefore it has become a priceless symbol of inexplicable power (Lowenthal, 1961:4).

These feelings toward land have important social implications as well. Ownership of land is seen as a means to insure continuity while strengthening solidarity among family members. Land provides important functions for the peasantry. Besides providing shelter and minimum subsistence its role was symbolic. To the peasantry, land becomes a
symbol of family lines and is viewed as having an unlimited capacity for sustaining future generations of kin forever (Besson, 1988:27).

It has been argued that this symbolic view of land is an inherited variant from the not so distant European colonial past. Raymond Smith (1971) believed that the retention of undivided rights among the Guyanese peasantry was derived from intimate knowledge of the dominant land holding system. Edith Clark (1971) opposed this view and feels that the Caribbean land tenure reflected African principles. She believed that once land was acquired peasants fell into their "traditional" African ways (Thornburg, 1989:12). Jean Besson, however, disagrees with these cross cultural generalizations and provides the most solid explanation for this symbolism. She believes that the symbolic human/land relationship had its origin within Caribbean society itself. In other words, attitudes and the pattern of transference was an adaptation to the particular historical experience of each West Indian colony (Besson, 1979:11).

Regardless of the origin of this deep attachment to land, there exists a paradoxical view toward land among the Caribbean peasantry. The paradox, Besson explains, is that
land is perceived to be a scarce resource while at the same time it is perceived to have unlimited capacity for sustaining future generations of descendants (Besson, 1988:27). She has found in her micro-level studies that the "short term economic aspects of such land are subordinated to its long term symbolic role" (1988:27). This symbolic relation to land creates uncertainty about its use. Therefore, the acquisition of land itself becomes more important than the productive uses of that land.

The Caribbean peasantry is a unique social variant since its very presence has come as a consequence of capitalist development. As peasants emerged from the confines of the plantation they sought to define themselves as economic individuals in the wider agrarian structure. Their initial problem was the acquisition of land. Peasants emerged as an interstitial grouping confined to marginal lands. Regardless of their marginal position, the newly formed peasantry utilized their land to define their wealth and freedom. More importantly peasants developed a symbolic relationship with land that transcended economic considerations. This symbolic relationship to land and their adaptation to marginal environments provides insight on how a cocoa peasantry was to gain independence and prosperity in Grenada during the late nineteenth century.
Chapter Three

The Fall of the Sugar Plantation and the Rise of Cocoa Production in Grenada
Chapter Three: The Fall of the Sugar Plantation and the Rise of Cocoa Production in Grenada

I. Introduction

This chapter seeks to explore the rather complex unfolding of a group of interrelated social, economic, and political factors that led to the fall of the sugar plantation in Grenada in the late 1800s. Another intent of the chapter is to discuss how the parallel extension of cocoa cultivation enabled Grenada to withstand the adverse economic conditions that plagued much of the region. Finally, an analysis of the development of the cocoa market is presented to highlight the responsiveness of Grenadian planters to the sugar depression at the turn of the 19th century.

II. The Demise of the Sugar Plantation in the West Indies

Grenadian sugar planters undoubtedly felt great anxiety when British industrialists supported the abolition of slavery. Industrialists were opposed to slavery because they perceived that it was the cause for the high price of West Indian sugar. Industrialists, mainly wealthy sugar refiners in Bristol, Liverpool, Lancaster, and alike complained that they had no other choice but to purchase higher priced West Indian sugar which increased their costs of refining. Increasing production costs were transferred to consumers
resulting in a decline in the domestic consumption of sugar. As the refining industry began to suffer industrialists increased their attacks on the preferential treatment of West Indian sugar in the British market by supporting the abolition cause (Williams, 1970:316).

Concurrently, industrialists began to embrace the principles of free trade and the ideas of Adam Smith. Smith brought into question the economic justification of slavery by pointing to the high cost of the slave over the free laborer. Smith's findings contradicted prior reports that discussed the various merits of slave labor on West Indian plantations. Industrialists pointed to the use of slave labor as the primary reason for the high cost of West Indian sugar. They argued that "The work done by slaves, though it appears to cost only their maintenance, is in the end dearest of any" (Williams, 1961:6). The motives of British industrialists were obviously self-serving as they generally failed to mention that other sugar producers utilized slave labor.

Under the pressure from industrialists and other interest groups the British government decided to listen to these outcries and introduced the Emancipation Act of 1833. The Emancipation Act called for the freedom of all slaves in
the following year. However, a system of contract or apprenticeship was devised to ease the pressure of the transition from slavery to freedom and to "... strike a balance between the slaves on the one hand, and the planters on the other" (Williams, 1970:297). Under Apprenticeship all freedmen under the age of six were to be categorized as either domestic or agricultural servants, according to the type of work they had performed in the year prior to abolition (Green, 1976:132). All slaves were required to perform labor on estates in which they received limited payment or compensation. Apprenticeship was to last four years until formal emancipation in 1838.

On August 1, 1838, all slaves were emancipated; however, it did nothing to change the terms of trade between England and her West Indian colonies. In fact, emancipation increased the cost of West Indian sugar in England. "The emancipation of slaves in 1838 left planters with a disorganized labor force, and doubled the cost of production" (Shephard, 1939:176). Growing international competition in the sugar trade placed great pressure on West Indian planters. The global production of sugar was increasing rapidly, which subsequently decreased world prices. For instance, wholesale prices\(^1\) of British West Indian muscovado sugar were approximately 49s. 1d. per
hundred weight (cwt.) in 1840, but by 1845 prices had fallen to 32s. 11d. (See Appendix 1.1).

Both Cuba and Brazil were fierce competitors with the West Indies, producing cane sugar at much lower cost. In 1841, British West Indian sugar was 39s. 8d. per hundred weight, while the price of Brazilian sugar was 20s. 9d. per cwt. (Green, 1976: 231). The lower price of foreign sugar prompted Parliament to pass annual acts to admit Brazilian and Cuban sugar into the British market, for refining and export only (Brizan, 1984: 101). The low price of foreign sugar undermined West Indian planters' niche in their traditional market. "The average Grenadian planter needed a price of 50/- to make a reasonable profit, but the Cuban producer needed only about 30/- to make a larger profit" (Brizan, 1984: 101). West Indian planters continued to produce for this market, but at a price that hardly kept them afloat. Furthermore, planters were no longer able to sell their surplus in European markets, as the price fetched was substantially below their production cost.

Poor West Indian manufacturing techniques also increased production costs. The technology utilized for the extraction of cane juice was primitive and "the most prominent feature of the muscovado sugar industry was
wastefulness and slovenliness" (Beachey, 1957:61). The West Indian sugar industry had become technically inefficient. Sugar that was grown on "...inferior, poorly situated British Colonial plantations was selling below the cost of bringing it to market. The poorest estates in the British Caribbean were generally located in older colonies where soil exhaustion occasioned disproportionately heavy expenditures on labour and fertilizer" (Green, 1976:39). In the Windwards, this low level of technology was only exacerbated by the logistical problems of producing cane on the sloping land of a rugged mountainous interior.

West Indian planters were to receive yet another severe blow, in the form of the Equalization Act of 1846. This act brought about a gradual lowering of duties on all foreign sugar. For instance, in 1841 the duty on foreign muscovado entering the United Kingdom was 66s. 2d. per cwt., but by 1854 the duty had dropped to 12s. (P.P. 1846/ XLIV/437; P.P. 1861/LVIII/541). In an attempt to lessen the impact on the West Indies, "The British Government agreed to retard the reduction and extinction of the preferential duty until 1854. . ." (Shephard, 1939:176). This was of no avail as the Equalization Act of 1846 had almost an immediate impact on the West Indies sugar industry. "In 1841 the margin of production afforded British West Indian sugar in the British
market was 41/- per cwt., but by 1854 it was zero" (Brizan, 1984:139). Foreign sugar virtually flooded the market which led to further decreases in sugar prices. The reduction of sugar prices in Great Britain had ruinous effects on many marginal plantations throughout the British West Indies.

With planters facing both higher production costs and a loss of market share they began to rely more heavily on credit markets to stay afloat. This reliance on external financing and the failure of the market to absorb expensive West Indian sugar contributed to plantation decline. Grenada was one such colony where the prospects for financial solvency looked grim. "During 1838-1856 some 47 estates were abandoned, and between 1856 and 1866 an additional 21 out of 142" were abandoned (Brizan,1984:140). The failure of West Indian plantations created concern in the financial markets in London. In 1847, the West Indian Bank and most other West Indian lending houses in England failed. English financiers clearly became skeptical of extending credit to West Indian concerns. This is illustrated by a prominent Grenadian merchant, Mr. J.A. Hankley in his testimony concerning the "The Sugar Question". He stated that, "he makes no advances to parties having West India property alone, preferring to risk the loss of what is now due, to making further advances" (Augier,1962:71). The extension of
credit had become such a vital part of the plantation system that when financial markets failed it reduced the ability of the still solvent plantations to compete with cultivation in virgin territories.

The lack of credit meant that many planters were not able to improve capital equipment. This lack of investment led to a general deterioration of equipment. Minimal levels of investment in the production process resulted in even lower yields and a perpetuation of poor manufacturing techniques. The lack of improvement in manufacturing techniques was exacerbated by the high incidence of absentee ownership. Brizan indicates the prevalence of this situation in Grenada, when he writes, "by 1857 over 65% of Grenada's estates were owned by absentees; of a total of 152 planters in 1844, only 39 were resident in Grenada" (1984:139). Absentee ownership in Grenada led to poor management of estates and sometimes a pilfering of monies by the manager and overseer:

Some attorneys (managers) lived extravagantly at their employers' expense, and those who were colonial merchants often overstocked estates with supplies of low quality from their own stores while charging the highest market price (Green, 1976:60).
The lack of investment and pilferage of resources only exaggerated market inefficiencies and created widespread economic stagnation throughout the region.

The high incidence of debt and bankruptcy in the West Indies was of deep concern to the British government. The British Government responded by passing a law which was designed "...to facilitate the transfer of encumbered estates from illiquid planters to liquid merchants and investors" (Brizan, 1984:140). A central court was established in London to overlook the transactions in the local courts. "The central court in London was to ensure uniformity of decisions and proceedings and to provide protection for West Indian merchants and proprietors in England" (Beachey, 1957:3). The court was established in Grenada in 1866 and functioned fairly well until parliament repealed the Act in 1885. Brizan depicts the magnitude of the court's activities in Grenada, when he writes that, Under the act "28 estates were sold by the Encumbered estates court. These amounted to 12,389 acres and were sold for £38,330 - a rate of £2.9 per acre and £1,368 per estate" (Brizan, 1984:141).

In contrast, only a few planters were able to withstand this economic crisis and achieve a position of relative
economic growth. The only British West Indian colonies to experience financial gains were British Guiana and Trinidad where investments were made in modern production techniques and large tracts of land could be easily exploited. These colonies benefited from economies of scale substantially lowering their unit cost of production. Also, laws had enabled them to benefit from a large influx of East Indian immigrants. However, other colonies such as Grenada were not as lucky and only experienced a stabilization of the amount of sugar exported. In Grenada sugar exports averaged 4,088 tons between 1854 and 1874. (See Table 3.1)

This stabilization in sugar exports was not because planters were producing more efficiently but rather a consequence of a new policy that based sugar duties "...on a graduated scale, successfully increasing as the quality of sugar ranged upwards" (Beachey, 1957:44). This worked in favor of the West Indian planters who had not invested in modern technologies. Lower quality sugar from the West Indies was not susceptible to a high duty. Therefore, planters were able to enjoy a period of relative prosperity until the British Government became more committed to the principles of free trade and removed all sugar duties in 1874 (Beachey: 1957:46).
Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Tons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1854</td>
<td>4,764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>4,938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>2,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866</td>
<td>5,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>3,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>3,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>2,528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The removal of these duties resulted in a rapid expansion of sugar consumption in England. In fact, "overall consumption in the United Kingdom rose from 650,000 tons in 1870 to 930,000 tons in 1880" (Beachey, 1957:47).

The expansion of sugar imports was primarily due to a rapid influx of European beet sugar. Beet sugar is extracted from the beetroot and was produced in temperate climates. As a result, the West Indies faced competition not only from other tropical regions of the globe, but also from within Europe itself. In general, beet sugar was to prove a formidable competitor to cane sugar. (See Table 3.2).

Clearly, the inverse relation between cane imports and beet sugar imports is indicative of the importance of beet sugar in view of market share.

Again West Indian producers found themselves unable to compete. European beet sugar refiners relied on:

a complex system of payments...[that] were refunds of internal excise taxes for exported beet sugar; the refunds were based on conventional sugar extraction standards, so refiners were encouraged to improve techniques to receive higher refunds ("bounties") for the greatest amount of sugar that could be produced from a given weight of beet (Richardson, 1992b:173).
Table 3.2

Sugar Imports to Great Britain, 1885-1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cane Sugar B.W.I</th>
<th>Cane Sugar OTHER REGIONS</th>
<th>Beet Sugar</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>1123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>987</td>
<td>1270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>1169</td>
<td>1497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>1362</td>
<td>1512</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Unit in thousands of tons
Essentially, these internal subsidies set forth by Governments throughout Europe became the backbone of the industry and had devastating effects on the West Indies.

Obviously, West Indian sugar planters were not able to compete with these "intergovernmental tariffs" in Europe and were faced with imminent economic ruin. The West Indian Committee Circular reported that Sir Neville Lubbock, while speaking at a West Indian club dinner in 1899, summarized the economic situation in the West Indies in view of the European sugar bounties:

They (planters) could not improve permanently the state of the West Indies unless they got fresh capital into them. They could not get fresh capital as sugar bounties continued; Thence came to the conclusion as put in any Euclid, THEREFORE YOU MUST ABOLISH THE SUGAR BOUNTIES! (West India Committee Circular 1899).

This echoed the sentiment among West Indian Planters who now ironically pressured parliament to pursue free trade and called for a reduction of all bounties.

III. Agricultural Transformation to Cocoa in Grenada

As prospects for West Indian sugar planters became uncertain, several colonies responded by turning their attention to alternative crops. Few West Indian colonies
adjusted well; however, Trinidad and Grenada stood as the most notable exceptions. Cocoa cultivation in these colonies was facilitated by geography as they both commanded positions well below the known hurricane tracts.

Cacao or cocoa is believed to have been introduced to Grenada from the Spanish main via Trinidad in the early 1700s. "The cultivation of cocoa, coffee, and cotton was commenced in 1714" (Grenada Handbook, 1946:26). Harley Milstead argues that initially cacao was not a prominent crop, as it was first "produced only in peasant gardens by the free colored population" (Milstead, 1940:195). Its importance grew significantly as the island's export commodity production increased. Brizan indicates that by 1753, "There were some 83 sugar plantations, 27,525,600 coffee trees, 150,000 cocoa trees, 800 cotton trees, 5,740,450 trenches of cassava and 933,596 banana trees" (1984:27). By the mid eighteenth century Grenada topped Trinidad, Jamaica, and St. Vincent and became the largest producer and exporter of cocoa in the British West Indies.

However, the economic focus of the colony was to change dramatically as the island received an influx of British citizens following the end of the Seven Years War with the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1763. The opening of
these colonies to British subjects was looked upon favorably by those who had not been able to acquire land in colonies where land had been exploited. "The attraction was the presence of higher yielding, pristine soils, on which sugar cane could be raised, and from which returns could be immense. . ." (Watts, 1987:315). As a result of this influx Grenada began to experience a gradual shift from a diverse economic base to one that was focused around the cultivation of sugar cane. "Sugar estates increased from 81 in 1763 to 125 by 1772 occupying 32,000 acres" (Hess, 1991:12). Furthermore, the supply of cocoa outgrew its demand causing financial distress among small cocoa producers. As a result the importance of cocoa began to decline in comparison to sugar. Although, it was still cultivated for export it was considered to be a secondary peasant crop. In 1804 there were 337 estates in operation. Of these 124 were entirely cultivated in sugar, only 21 were planted in cocoa and coffee, 31 in coffee, 9 in sugar and cotton, 23 in cotton, and 129 in provisions, wood and pasture (Hess, 1991:13).

Faced with increasing cost after emancipation and decreasing profit returns, Grenadian sugar planters began to change from sugar to cocoa. MacMillian explains:
In time, however, as if inspired with the ability to peer into the future and gaining some knowledge of what was to be, those interested in agriculture and the propriety of the island began to turn their attention to the cultivation of cacao... (1922:243).

The agrarian transformation from sugar to cocoa, however, was gradual. Some planters questioned the financial feasibility of cocoa while others looked to cocoa as their salvation. To Grenadian planters the change to cocoa represented little risk as there was already considerable knowledge of the crop and its performance in Grenada.

Henry Barkley Esq., a wealthy Grenadian planter and merchant, in his testimony to the Select Committee on the West Indian Colonies in 1842, explains why many planters were aggressively pursuing the cultivation of cocoa. He stated that in comparison to sugar:

The cultivation of cacao does not require continuous labor - It is a crop that requires the application of labor five or six times a year, for the purpose of weeding or gathering the cocoa, but is not consistent (Select committee on the West India Colonies, May 26, 1842).

Cocoa obviously attracted planters because of its low cost production and its increasing demand in the metropolitan markets of Europe. Hence, the spread of cocoa cultivation must be viewed as a "direct result of the numerous crises that beset sugar" (Brizan, 1984:142).
Abandoned sugar estates were perfect testing grounds for the cultivation of cocoa. "These abandoned estates were not left to waste, ... as their mountain lands were being cultivated in small patches by freed slaves" (Hess, 1991:13). A contract system (See Chapter IV) was utilized by many planters. This system enabled planters to establish their cocoa fields at a low cost, while providing ex-slaves with more secure land tenure as well as the opportunity of acquiring parcels of land themselves.

It was clear that a transformation was underway, but of what magnitude and where? "In 1852 only 864 acres were planted in cocoa, compared to 7,105 in canes; twelve years later the acreage in cane fell to 5,425 while cocoa increased to 4,464 acres. . . ." (Brizan, 1984:142). Returns of produce for each parish for the years 1885-1891 provide a better understanding of the agricultural transformation and the spatial expanse of cocoa cultivation. The parishes of St Georges, St. John's, St. Mark's, and St. Patrick's experienced decreases in sugar cane acreage while cocoa acreage increased. In the parish of St. John's the agricultural transformation was most noticeable. In 1885, St. John's parish had 186 acres of sugar cane and 796 acres of cocoa under cultivation. In 1891 there were 69 acres of
cane and 2,861 of cocoa (Bluebooks, 1885, 1891). In 1885 in St. Patrick’s there were 347 acres planted in cane and 1,651 acres planted in cocoa and by 1891 sugar cane acreage had fallen to 172 while the number of acres in cocoa had risen to 2,379 (Bluebooks, 1885, 1891).

In St. Andrew’s parish there was a remarkable increase in both cocoa and sugar cane cultivation. In 1885 in St. Andrew’s parish there were 32 acres planted in cane and 1,480 acres of cocoa; six years later there were 453 acres of cane and 3,521 acres of cocoa (Bluebooks, 1885, 1891). However, in St. David’s parish cocoa acreage actually decreased while sugar cane increased. Increases in sugar cane acreage in St. David’s may be attributed to its physical landscape. Existing in both St. Davids and St. Andrew’s were sizeable tracts of flat land favorable for the cultivation of sugar.

These data reveal that there was a distinct spatial relationship regarding the cultivation of cocoa in Grenada. Cultivation was restricted to central mountainous regions of the island where steep slopes and heavy rainfall prevented the development of the sugar industry (Hess, 1991:12). Grenada’s mountainous landscape proved suitable for the cultivation of cocoa (See Figure 3.1). In fact, the
Figure 3.1 Distribution of Cocoa in Grenada, Circa 1885

Source: This map, which was made by the author, represents an estimation of areas under cocoa cultivation in the 1880s. This map was drawn using data from Colonial Bluebooks, 1880-1890, Milstead (1940) and field research conducted in Grenada during the summer of 1992.
Royal West India Commission of 1897 reported that in 1896 no other crop could compete with cocoa in Grenada. The 1897 Commission found the principle industries in order of importance cacao, spices, sugar, cotton, ground provisions, fruit, coffee and kola. In 1897 the estimated area in cultivation was 20,000 acres in cacao, 2,000 in spices, 1,000 in spices, 1,000 in cotton and 1,000 in sugar.

Grenada was able to avoid the economic depression that beset many of its regional counterparts in the latter half of the 19th century. Grenada’s low level of dependence of sugar and rapid extension of cocoa allowed the colony to achieve relative prosperity during the sugar bounty depression. Grenada was no longer dependent on sugar; in fact, sugar exports had diminished to nothing by 1896 (See Table 3.3). A more explicit depiction of the agricultural transformation is the insignificance of the value of sugar cane exports compared to that of cocoa (See Figure 3.2). In 1895, the total value of the colony’s exports was L 172,020 of which cocoa accounted for approximately 80 percent of this value. Grenada was never to return to it pre-emancipation level of sugar production and in late 19th and early 20th century cocoa was the colony’s most important crop. (Table 3.4). Grenada’s prosperity hinged on the extension of cocoa cultivation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colony</th>
<th>Value of Exports</th>
<th>Exports of Sugar*</th>
<th>% Sugar* in Total Exports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>L 1,700,000</td>
<td>L 300,000</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.Guiana</td>
<td>L 1,814,000</td>
<td>L 1,280,000</td>
<td>70 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad</td>
<td>L 1,363,000</td>
<td>L 773,000</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>L 577,000</td>
<td>L 588,000</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St.Vincent</td>
<td>L 57,000</td>
<td>L 24,000</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td>L 182,000</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Report of the West India Commission of 1897. HMPO. Note * Refers to all sugar products including rum and molasses, etc.
Figure 3.2 Value of Sugar and Cocoa Exports from Grenada, 1882-1912.

Table 3.4

Value of Cocoa and Total Exports in Grenada, Selected years, 1886–1908

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Value of Cocoa Exports*</th>
<th>Total Value of Exports*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>155,939</td>
<td>180,691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>166,178</td>
<td>195,595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>200,267</td>
<td>236,643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>138,520+</td>
<td>172,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>272,226</td>
<td>321,766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>311,519</td>
<td>359,245</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* all values in Pounds
+ a serve drought adversely affected the cocoa crop

IV. The Development of a Cocoa Market in Europe

To complete the analysis of the agrarian transformation from sugar to cocoa production in Grenada, one must look at the development of the cocoa markets in Europe. The questions of how and why the demand for cocoa developed become essential. To pursue these questions, inquiry must leave Grenada and focus on events in Europe that caused the demand for cocoa to increase in the late nineteenth century.

Cortes on his conquest of Mexico was impressed by an Amerindian drink 'Chocolatl' or chocolate which he introduced to the Spanish Royal court. Word about the hearty drink spread through elite circles and it soon became a recognizable commodity. However, it was not to develop as a popular commodity for some time. Cocoa remained a luxury item as it was expensive to purchase.

It was claimed that cocoa held medicinal qualities and was a great source of nourishment. Throughout the Seventeenth century moderate use of cocoa was encouraged as it was supposed to preserve one's health and to divert sickness. Cocoa quickly became a symbol of health and social status among Europe’s nobility. It was reported that Louis XIV served chocolate to his guests at receptions but soon abandoned the custom on the score that it was too
expensive (Van Hall, 1932:4). Clearly, it was a rare tropical commodity that caught the attention of many and was used for medicinal purposes as well as to impress.

The consumption of cocoa was to receive assistance from another commodity, namely sugar. The use of sugar also had its foundations within the confines of European elitism; however, its growing use as a sweetener prompted the wealthy to add it to cocoa, a rich bitter substance. The addition of sugar to cocoa gave it a satisfying taste and its popularity increased accordingly. Mintz makes the connection between the use of sugar and the prevalence of "bitter-specific" foods, he writes:

The bitter substances are "bitter-specific"—liking watercress has nothing to do with liking eggplant, for instance. But, in contrast, liking sucrose seems to be "sweet general." Added to bitter substances, sugar makes them taste alike, at least in so far as it makes them taste sweet (Mintz, 1985b:109).

The bitterness of cocoa and the emergence of sugar, a substance that distinctly changed its taste, greatly impacted the European palate.

Merchants as well as prominent political figures were also attracted to the rich taste of cocoa. During the eighteenth century it was at the center of London’s social
gatherings. "Chocolate houses were central to London's gregarious—all male gregarious—social life of the time" (Morton, 1986:21). In fact, cocoa had become an exceedingly fashionable beverage in England. Whymer writes that the "Cocoa Tree Club in St. James's street was a recognizable rendezvous of the Tory party" (1912:2).

The lowering of sugar duties in England coupled with the expansion in the cultivation of cocoa lowered its price resulting in an increase of imports. During the 1820s imports of cocoa beans to Great Britain rose from 250,000 to 500,000 pounds. However, the increase in imports is misleading as "over half of the production was utilized by the Navy" (Whymer, 1912:2). The fact that the Navy consumed over half of the amount imported indicates that cocoa was not yet a popular commodity.

In fact, some patrons despised cocoa because of its richness. The high fat content made cocoa hard to digest resulting in an outcry for a lighter beverage. Morton tells us: "To cut the unctuousness of cocoa, . . . the English used potato starch, arrowroot, and even powdered seashells" (Morton, 1986:46). The beverage's richness and high fat content made its digestion uncomfortable for many.
A Dutch chemist, Coenraad van Houten in 1828, solved this problem when he invented the cocoa press. Van Houten's press removed the fatty butter from the cocoa bean and changed the way cocoa was consumed. The separation of the cocoa butter from the bean produced a powder containing 22-25 percent fat (Wood and Lass, 1985:5). Van Houten had ended the need for neutralizers and coloring agents. His invention not only made cocoa more digestible, but it was now much lighter, more pleasant, and also cheaper (Van Hall, 1932:13).

The extraction of cocoa butter led to a variety of products (Wood and Lass, 1985:5) and eventually to "the chocolate cake" industry. In 1847 the Bristol firm of Fry & Sons introduced "a grainy rather harsh-flavoured 'eating chocolate'. . .the world's happiest nibble had begun" (Morton, 1986:50). The cocoa butter which was extracted from the bean was added to roasted and ground cocoa beans and then moulded with sugar into a crude eatable form. As a result the cocoa industry experienced rapid growth.

Everywhere is the word to describe the location of chocolate factories in the nineteenth century (Morton, 1986:63). Eating chocolate was the new craze and this attracted the Swiss, Germans, English, and the Americans
into the great chocolate race. Processing innovations continued in its manufacture and by the late 1800s the product was a crude form of what we consume today. Morton tells us that:

more and more of it was turned out as increasing industrialization made production feasible and increasing cocoa crops provided the wherewithal. Import duties, once so high that drinking chocolate had been an exclusive privilege of the rich, were lower now for the big shipments from plantations in Latin America. . .(Morton, 1986:95).

As the industry grew, the world was to experience a spread of cocoa tree cultivation. There was a swing of production from the Middle and South America to the Caribbean and then to West Africa. Grenada was undoubtedly in a position to benefit from these market developments. The United Kingdom provided the biggest market for Grenadian cocoa. In 1885 approximately 94% of Grenada's 9,138,166 lbs of cocoa was exported directly to the United Kingdom while the other 6% was exported to France, Holland, The United States and other British colonies in the West Indies (Bluebook, 1885). In 1890, cocoa imports to the United Kingdom were 20,224,000 lbs and production in Grenada accounted for approximately 38 percent of this total. Obviously, chocolate was catching the attention of many in England. Processing innovations, increased production and lower prices meant that cocoa was
to become an important tropical commodity for the burgeoning industrial masses.
End Notes

1. All values and prices are given in old British monetary denominations. They are:

   20 shillings =  L1  one pound sterling
   12 pence (d) =  1s. or 1/-  one shilling
   4 farthings =  1d. one pence
Chapter Four

Post-emancipation Grenada and the Rise of a Cocoa Peasantry
Chapter Four: Post-emancipation Grenada and the Rise of a Cocoa Peasantry

I. Introduction

This chapter seeks to explore the social, economic, and environmental features that gave rise to a "cocoa peasantry" during the late nineteenth century in Grenada. The analysis will focus on a system of land use that emerged as planters were faced with financial insolvency.

Given the restructuring of economic relations, another intent of this chapter is to focus on the opportunities that allowed the peasantry to acquire land with secure tenure. This chapter will also deal with the nature of cocoa and its cultivation as well as the natural advantages provided to the peasantry by the island's physical geography. Finally, a reconstruction of a prototypical peasant village is presented to highlight how innovation in cocoa cultivation brought about improvements in peasant living conditions.

II. Metayage as the solution

Grenadian sugar planters restricted by a lack of capital and faced with declining sugar prices turned to cocoa as their salvation in the late nineteenth century.
Planters desperately sought to lower cultivation costs of their lands. Their first response was to lower wage rates on estates. The lowering of wages, which averaged about 10d. per task during the 1860s, resulted in an alienation of laborers from estate work and a general movement of laborers away from estates (Marshall, 1965b:12-13; Bluebooks, 1860-1870). This created a void in the Grenadian labor market and as a result planters were to fall victim to "The Labor Problem" that plagued much of the West Indies.

The scarcity of agricultural labor prompted Grenadian planters to look for solutions. The indentured immigration scheme was perceived to be a solution. In a letter following the transmission of the Bluebook for the year 1857, the Government office in Grenada discussed the economic advantages of the indentured labor system:

I give an extract of a letter written to me by a gentleman, largely connected with estates here as well as in Trinidad to which the Island has taken the lead of us in the system of Immigration, perhaps it may not be out of place to give the working of the system there as far as I can from my own knowledge. I will confine myself to one estate there in which I am interested. During slavery it shipped out about 120 Hogsheads which fell after emancipation to about 80 Hogsheads; since the regular introduction of "Coolie" immigrants the crop has steadily increased to 400 Hogsheads (Executive No. 35 Government office Grenada, 1857).

The effort to achieve higher returns in a time of depression prompted many planters in Grenada to pursue such schemes.
However, indentured labor schemes met with limited success as they proved too costly for an insolvent plantocracy. In Grenada, planters had neither the means, nor official encouragement to undertake immigration and as a result resorted to the so called metayage system (Green, 1976:254).

The Metairie or Metayage system adopted in 1848, was a contract system that had been developed early on by the French in their colonies. In Grenada, metayage was introduced by planters as a last recourse from poverty. The metayage system was a "desperate expedient" which enabled planters to retain control of their estates (Shephard, 1947:64). Under the system planters and metayers were interdependent. The estates were to provide the land, machines, stock, and carts while the metayer was to contribute his labour (Brizan, 1984:133). A contract was usually agreed upon in which the metayer undertook cultivation of a parcel of land in ways that were stipulated by the planter. Metayage encompassed a variety of arrangements with regard to the amount of land given, the situation of the plots and the fertility of the soil. Estate owners would give a person a piece of land, 5 to 10 acres or so, to work and bring in with cocoa. Five years was adequate time for the cocoa to mature and the land to be well cultivated after which the owner would resume control.
of the land. The were various ways of getting paid; the metayer would get paid per tree, split the yield of a mature crop, or in some cases would be awarded marginal estate land (Personal Interview, June 10:1992). Most important is that metayage, which was introduced to sidestep the cost of imported labor, provided the laborer with a vital stake in the resources which he had been denied during slavery (Marshall, 1965a:28).

Some planters were disenchanted with its application as they opposed any innovation which seemed to lessen their profits or weaken their control over land and labor (Marshall, 1965a:30). Impoverished sugar planters who were unable to finance the establishment of their cocoa estates took the lead in utilizing metayage. Lt. Governor Keate in an inter-colonial dispatch to Governor Colbroke in 1854 reported that: "the cocoa and coffee estates throughout the island are managed almost without exception upon the Metairie system and with success" (cited in Brizan, 1984:179).

A prominent cocoa planter, H.J. Ross Esq., in his testimony before the Select Committee in 1842, provides insight for reasons why the metayage system became popular among cocoa planters in Grenada:
In fact I had suffered under all the evils under which I saw my neighbors in different parts of the colony suffering, and I did not think laborers would remain on the estates, except with a different arrangement (Select Committee of 1842: 7492,7493).

Ross' testimony indicates that metayage was seen as a solution to the labor problems. It was a system that restructured labor relations while affording the planter a profit. He continues that "the great advantage of this system was that it gave the Negro something to gain and something to lose in the cultivation and conduct of an estate" (Select Committee of 1842,7491).

Its application was not without conflict. Contracts varied throughout the island, some were in written form, however, most were oral,"... and usually extremely and deliberately vague in the definition of rights and responsibilities" (Marshall,1965a:31). Verbal arrangements offered the metayer no form of security. A former overseer on the Mt. Rueil estate in St. Patrick's explains that:

-- Sometimes the laborer would not get a thing -- the estate owner could do this because of some little technicality -- and because he knew people in high places! (Personal Interview, June 4, 1992).

As a result, "most of the offenses, crimes and court cases during the 1850s and 1860s were in one way or the other,
concerned with the working of various systems of land
tenancy" (Brizan, 1984:134).

Legislation formalized contracts which facilitated a
ggradual easing of conflicts and a more equitable
relationship between planter and metayer. In this regard,
metayage must be viewed as emancipation in the making as it
forged a middle ground between the plantation and the estate
worker. Metayage allowed a semi-independent small farming
class to emerge and compete freely among themselves for the
purpose of economic betterment.

III. The Small Cocoa plot: A hillside adaptation

A distinct pattern emerged in regards to the location
of peasant plots. In Grenada, the peasant cultivation of
cocoa was a "highland adaptation". Mr. G. Whitfield Smith
in his testimony to the Royal Commission explained:

It therefore follows that there is considerable area of
lowland available for cocoa cultivation, but the
present [land] market does not warrant its extension.
These lowlands all belong to large estates, and I do
not think the owners would be willing to sell out in
small lots to peasant cultivators (Report... Royal
Commission 1897, App. C, Part III. "Grenada" pg. 31)

In Grenada, peasants were restricted to marginal areas and
though they were restricted to a poor resource base it
actually became the basis for a viable farming sector. Although peasant lands were steep, inaccessible and considered second best for agricultural pursuits, they were suitable for cocoa cultivation. The mountainous nature of a considerable part of the island and well-watered valleys provided certain agro-climatic features favorable for cacao culture (Milstead, 1940:195).

The cocoa tree is very delicate and requires a special atmosphere as it is sensitive to climate, moisture, soil, and elevation. Cocoa is a crop that is well suited for cultivation in intermediate altitudes. Although it is best suited for altitudes between 300 and 800 ft., it has been known to be cultivated as high as 1700 ft. in Grenada (Milstead, 1940:196). Cocoa also grows best in environments that are wet and humid. It requires a fairly stable environment in regards to temperature and rainfall. It is important for the rainfall to be well distributed without one outstanding dry season during the year.

The cultivation of cocoa on hillsides and sheltered river valleys allows the cocoa tree to benefit from a comparatively cool environment. The mild upland climate in river valleys reduced the need for shade as the island's rugged interior protects the delicate tree from prolonged
exposure to direct sunlight. Grenada’s highlands also protect trees from high winds. Winds can damage cocoa as the removal of its vegetative cover can leave the trees burnt and unproductive.

Soils are also an important variable for the cultivation of cocoa. In fact, Grenadian mountain soils differ greatly from lowland soils. In Grenada, valley soils are usually rich sedimentary alluvial deposits, while mountain soils in Grenada tend to be clay loams with moderate fertility (Davies, 1923:161). Although the soils in the valley are considered to be of better quality, the cocoa tree is better suited for planting in mountain soils as they provide better drainage. Adequate drainage is essential for proper growth as high moisture content in the soil may adversely affect the root system resulting in a general wilting of the plant.

Although Grenada’s mountainous interior afforded the peasantry with an ideal environment for cocoa cultivation, it has been associated with extensive erosion and landslide activity. Cocoa farms are highly susceptible to erosion during the early stages of cultivation as the planting of cocoa precipitates the clearing of forest land. Furthermore,
cocoa plots usually have an intensive system of drains to assure proper runoff. Governor Moloney explained:

Indeed these storm damages may now be viewed as general, not local, in their character, and as of yearly occurrence; they are due to the heavy and hasty flooding of rivers caused in the rainy season, in part by forest denudation of the hill tops, but mainly by the wide system of drainage necessary for cocoa cultivation... (C.O. 321/176)

Hillside cocoa cultivation combined with unusually high levels of precipitation during the 1880s and 90s brought about extensive damage not only to the environment, but to the colony’s growing network of roads and bridges (Grenada Handbook, 1910:60).

IV. Cocoa Cultivation and the Metayer

The extension of cocoa in Grenada was due to general peasant participation in its cultivation (Marshall, 1965b:4). By examining cultivation practices it is possible to understand the implications of metayage on the growth of a peasantry. The cultivation of cocoa under metayage provided the laborer a unique opportunity to acquire land.

Once the site was selected, the metayer was faced with the laborious task of felling forest land. Immediately after
all branches and stumps were removed, the land was lined, staked and prepared for the planting of the seedlings. Seedlings were usually planted in a linear fashion to provide efficiency in growth and picking. In Grenada, trees were spaced approximately 9 to 10 ft. apart as opposed to 12 to 14 ft. in other parts of the Caribbean and world (Preuss, 1903:176).

The metayer, while cautiously nurturing the cocoa into maturity, planted cassava and dasheen next to the young unprotected cocoa seedlings. These crops provided the necessary shade for the sprouting seedlings. When the dasheen matured it was carefully harvested so not to expose the cocoa to unnecessary sunlight; however, by this time the cassava was tall enough to provide shade. Before the cassava was harvested, temporary shade trees were planted alongside the young cocoa plant. The banana (bluggoes) plants provided shade and were an important source of food for the peasants. In fact, the metayer cultivated a variety of provision crops between the rows of growing cocoa. Cabbage, carrots, corn and chick peas, sweet potato, yams, and French beans were intercropped in a field until the cocoa matured and eventually shaded them out.
It took approximately four to five years for a cocoa plant to mature, at which time the metayer was able to exploit the land his/her benefit. Several tree crops were found to be intermixed with the cocoa. These trees were randomly dispersed throughout the field and became an important source of shade and food. It was commonly thought that cocoa was grown without permanent shade in Grenada; however, this assumption was incorrect as many observers neglected to include trees that provided food such as the breadfruit, avocado pear, orange, cashew, etc.

The cultivation of provision crops proved vital for the establishment of a cocoa plot and provided the metayer with food for his family and for sale at market. In fact, provisions found a ready market not only in the island, but in neighboring colonies of Barbados and Trinidad (Grenada Handbook, 1910:45). The cultivation of provision crops proved to be vital, as they also represented a source of quick cash in times of crises. It was possible for laborers to save as much as L20 per annum from the sale of these commodities (Lewis, 1936:5).

V. The Rise of a Cocoa Peasantry

The rise of a cocoa peasantry in Grenada is directly related to the agricultural transformation from sugar to
cocoa during the latter half of the 19th Century. It was the introduction of the metayage system that facilitated both the transformation of Grenada’s agricultural base and the rise of a peasantry. Metayage assured peasants of money from contracts and provided them with the opportunity to earn additional money from the sale of provision crops. Many peasants were able to save substantial amounts of capital which enabled them to acquire land. W.A. Lewis, in his Colonial Office pamphlet *The Evolution of the Peasantry in the West Indies*, quotes C.W. Day who describes the propensity of the former slaves to save and invest in land in the late 1800s:

The negro saves money - all negroes save money - and invest it in land, in fact becomes a small proprietor; and, being his own, he cultivates this land very carefully, living on less than half his produce, and finding a ready market for the rest. He gives no credit and has no bad debts, but gets the money down. He wants no tea or coffee and makes no disbursements like the white; but can exist almost entirely on the produce of his land. Thus by small degrees he hems in large plantations, and becomes himself a large landed proprietor...The negro watching his opportunity, he with money ready, pounces on as much of the spoils as he can obtain (Lewis, 1936:6).

An old farmer of Corinth, a village in St. David’s Parish supports Day’s observation and explains that when the system (metayage) worked well, the laborer, if he had any sense would use his money to invest in "a piece of cocoa" for himself and family:
When you get money, you save it for it is your only security -- and when you get a chance to buy land you buy it! It is better to dead and to have than to dead and to want... because... If you dead and you have, your wife will only cry once-- But -- If you dead and you want, your wife will cry twice - once because she misses you and once because she has nothing...

(Personal Interview, June 20:1992)

In fact, cocoa peasants led relatively simple lives and for a majority of them cocoa cultivation was a way of life (Phillips-Lewis, 1988:35).

In Grenada, most peasants took full advantage of the opportunities that existed and invested in land. But the question is; to what extent was land available in Grenada? Mr. Frank Gurney in his testimony to the Royal Commission of 1897 stated that:

From my own experience of selling lands I can state as follows, viz.: empty uncultivated lands, sold in small lots of say, half an acre to three acres, near the sea-coast, realize from L 20 to L 30 per acre. Ditto Lands in forest, more or less in the mountains, have realized L 4 to L 6 per acre (Report...Royal Commission 1897: App.C, Part III. Grenada, pg. 24).

As a result, a small peasant proprietary rose from the laboring classes1. In 1860, there were approximately 2000 peasants, by 1881 there were about 3,000 peasants with land amounting to 2.5 acres or less (Benoit, 1990:7). By 1895 there were some 6,799 holdings owned by private persons, of which no less than 5,600 were holdings of five acres or less
Despite the large numbers of peasant proprietors in the colony there was still a reluctance among many planters to pursue policies for the development of a peasantry. Planters perceived the peasantry to be antagonistic to agricultural development. However, this was to change when the neighboring island of St. Vincent was devastated by a hurricane in 1898 which displaced much of its laboring population (Richardson, 1989:117). In light of this event, the Government of the Windwards became involved in the settlement of laboring populations. The Land Settlement Ordinance in 1899 set forth large capital outlays which allowed the government to evaluate and purchase insolvent estates without recourse. (Richardson, 1989:121).

St. Vincent was the first Windward island to benefit from such schemes. In 1899, two estates near Kingstown were acquired for resettlement. The Windward Government had now become directly involved in the acquisition and redistribution of land. In 1903, land settlement schemes were pursued on the Grenadian dependency of Carriacou. The Government purchased the Harvey Vale and the Beausejour estates for the purposes of resettlement (Auchinleck, 1915:
10). In 1909, a land settlement scheme was formally adopted on the island of Grenada when the Government acquired Morne Rouge north, Morne Rouge south, Westerhall and Calivigny Annex. The total acreage of these estates was over 537 acres which were divided into some 190 small plots (Auchinleck, 1915:14). These policies helped contribute to the growth of a peasantry and by 1911 there were 8,349 peasant holdings under 10 acres in Grenada.

The development of the peasantry was further aided by the Government of Grenada. There was Governmental concern over the titles of land that peasants had acquired either by verbal arrangement or by squatting. In 1896, in an attempt to formalize the acquisition of land, the Legislative Council passed the Crown Land Ordinance. This ordinance facilitated the opening of uncultivated forested crown land for peasant settlement, while attempting to provide secure tenure through the registration of individual parcels. This land was to be sold "...into allotments of not less than two, and not more than five acres each, and no allotments shall exceed five acres except with the approval of the Governor in Council" (Crown land Ordinance 1896). The government prioritized the sale of land to applicants that were able to pay down the whole value of the lots. However,
there were also arrangements that enabled peasants with limited capital to acquire holdings.

Grenadian peasants contributed significantly to the economy by the cultivation of cocoa. In fact the scale of the island's agricultural transformation would not have been possible without the peasantry. But why did the peasantry, once they had acquired land, turn most of their attention toward the cultivation of a plantation crop as opposed to the traditional staples? To peasants the cultivation of cocoa seemed to be a worthwhile and profitable venture. Many peasants were already familiar with cocoa as it was their labor that had been fundamental in the extension of cocoa on estates. Furthermore, cocoa lends itself to the cultivation in marginal environments and did not require large capital outlays. In 1883 the Royal Commission, under the chairmanship of Sir William Crossman found that peasant involvement in the cultivation of export crops was beneficial for the colonies:

Perhaps not surprisingly, the Commissioners reported that one of the principle difficulties was the inability of the 'capitalists', by which they meant planters, "to obtain at all times a reliable supply of labour.... But the commissioners did not consider the peasantry an unmitigated evil: we found that to a very welcome degree, and in a steadily increasing proportion, negroes becoming peasant proprietors, and already in many islands, and especially in Jamaica and Grenada, are appreciably increasing exports (cocoa) (cited in Lobdell,1988:199)
The findings of the 1883 Commission were echoed in the report of the 1897 Commission. The 1897 Commission attributed the rapid extension of cocoa in the colony to the laboring classes who purchased small-holdings of land and planting them in cocoa (Report...Royal Commission 1897: App.C, Part III. Grenada, pg.24). Mr. C.H. Johnson reported that there was a tendency among peasants to plant a majority of their land in cocoa and indicated that there was little doubt that some holdings returned as being cultivated other than with cocoa or spice contained some cocoa (Census,1891). There was a distinct relationship between the growth of the peasantry and increases in cocoa production in Grenada (See Table 4.1). It is necessary to note that the fluctuations in cocoa production in the years 1895 and 1898 were due to local weather conditions. (i.e. drought). In the 1890's, 2,508 out of 3,024 land holdings or 83% of all cultivated land in the colony were registered as being less than five acres. There were 1,700 or 51.4% of all land holdings in the colony were registered as being purestand mature cocoa of which 1,422 out of the 1,700 cocoa holdings were registered as being under 4 acres and had an average of 1.66 acres each (Census, 1891).
Table 4.1

# of Peasant Holdings under 10 acres and Cocoa Exports in Grenada (Selected Years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Peasant Holdings</th>
<th>Cocoa Exports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>6,120</td>
<td>10,019,700 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>6,462</td>
<td>7,708,860 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>6,657</td>
<td>8,370,720 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>6,644</td>
<td>9,827,460 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>7,715</td>
<td>9,609,120 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>11,577,420 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>8,349</td>
<td>12,085,920 lbs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VI. Financial Improvements Among the Cocoa Peasantry

Grenada's prosperity in the 1880s and 1890s was with little doubt caused by the uninterrupted prosperity in the cocoa industry. Nevertheless, the data do not reveal the exact amount of cocoa produced by peasants in comparison to that produced on estates. To arrive at an understanding of the benefits received by peasants, we must turn to the data concerning the size of peasant cocoa holdings (1.66 acres).

Estimates of income levels among the peasantry can be obtained through an analysis of yields per acre. E.E. Cheesman (1936) in his report to *Tropical Agriculture* introduced a simple formula for estimating Cocoa yields per acre:

\[
\text{Trees per acre} \times \text{Pods per tree} \times \text{Cocoa beans per pod} = \text{Cocoa beans per acre}
\]

This formula is useful for our analysis of peasant income levels. In Grenada cocoa was grown intensively by small farmers with an average of 300 trees per acre\(^2\). Therefore, through rather simple calculations we can arrive at an estimate production figure for small holdings:
300 trees per acre x Avg. number of pods found on a
tree during the first and second harvest

\[
300 \times 75(1st \, harvest) = 22,500 \, pods \\
300 \times 30(2nd \, harvest) = 9,000 \, pods \\
\underline{+ \quad 31,500 \, pods \, per \, acre, \, per \, annum}
\]

With regard to the number of cocoa beans per pod, on average it takes about 7 pods to make approximately 1lb of wet cocoa. Therefore, 31,500 is divided by 7 to arrive at an average yield of 4,500lbs of wet cocoa per acre per annum. Wood and Lass tell us that wet cocoa will lose approximately 40% of its weight during the fermentation process (Wood and Lass, 1985:454). Therefore, 4,500lbs of wet cocoa is equal to approximately 2700lbs of dry cocoa or 27 Hundred weight (cwt.) per acre.

Although the 1891 census indicates that a majority of Grenadian peasants planted cocoa, we must be careful not to assume that all peasant plots were planted in purestands. In view of the size of the average peasant cocoa holding (1.66 acres), we see that the peasant who planted all his/her land in cocoa had an average yield of 45 cwt. However, the yields were also considerable for those who planted 75% or 50% of their land in cocoa. Peasants who had 75% of their land in cocoa had an estimated yield of 33
cwt., while those with 50% of their land in cocoa had a yield of about 22 cwt. per annum.

To estimate the potential net benefit to the cocoa peasantry we must relate these figures to London prices per cwt. of dry cocoa beans. Although London cocoa prices tended to fluctuate between 1882 to 1912 the prices never fell below 50s. per cwt. and reached a record price of 119s. per cwt. in September of 1907 (Grenada Handbook, 1910: 204). The average price per cwt. of dry cocoa for this period was 65s.\(^3\) (See Appendix 1.2). Therefore, the average potential net benefit for peasants with purestand plots is estimated to have been 2,925s or L 146 pounds sterling per annum. Peasants with 75% of their land received 2,145s. or L 107 pounds sterling, while those planting 50% of their land received an estimated 1,430s. or L 71 pounds sterling.

Although the Government made provisions for the construction of roads throughout the island there were still many infrastructure deficiencies. Grenada’s mountainous terrain helped to create weaknesses in communication and the internal marketing system. Peasants were logistically constrained from delivering their produce to local shipping agents in a timely fashion. Therefore, the supply of cocoa was uncertain as many peasant plots were located in
inaccessible or marginal areas. As a result, special middlemen known as "cocoa dealers" emerged to carry on a distributive role. An old farmer of Mt. Horne in St. Patrick's Parish explains:

During the harvest seasons, cocoa dealers would come to the farms and buy the cocoa from us. (wet or dry). The cocoa would be bought at a small price - you would not get any money instead you would get a check telling you how much you sold - When the cocoa was sold in market he would come with the money. Those men used to have a lot of money. (Personal interview, June 10:1992).

Cocoa dealers were quite industrious and filled an important niche in the economy by performing a critical task for the peasants. In 1910, 13,295,340lbs of cocoa were exported and there were some 96 licensed cocoa dealers, while in 1913 the quantity of cocoa exported fell to 11,422,080lbs but the number of cocoa dealers increased to 183 (Grenada Handbook, 1914: 220-224). This comparison allows us to infer as to the importance of the peasant cocoa farmer to the island’s economy through an observation of the number of cocoa dealers relative to exports.

Relations between the cocoa dealers and the peasantry were not always harmonious. The cocoa dealers were motivated by profits and usually bought peasant cocoa for much less than the London price. One farmer explains, "cocoa dealers
dem are no good! They used to buy the cocoa at sometimes half the price of what they would sell it to the big man dem!" (Personal Interview, June 5: 1992). Therefore, in most cases, these arrangements were more beneficial to the dealers. However, Mintz warns:

> It is dangerous to assume... that the middlemen (cocoa dealers) are parasites who interpose themselves between producer and consumer and levy a toll on both without rendering any service... we must not lose sight of the fact that the middlemen came into existence in response to a demand by producers... (1956: 22).

Cocoa dealers forged an important link between the growing peasant economy and the plantation sector. They undoubtedly played an important role given the scarce resources of the cocoa peasantry.

To what extent did benefits accrue to the cocoa peasantry? Although calculations of profit margins are difficult, a conservative estimate of peasant incomes can be derived by dividing the income in half to indicate the extraction of surplus by the cocoa dealers. Therefore, peasants would realize approximately half of the economic benefit from their land. Hence, the average peasant income for individuals with purestand cocoa plots was approximately L 72 sterling per annum. Peasants with 75% of their land in cocoa received L 53 pounds sterling, while those with 50% of their land received L 35 pounds sterling per annum. Although
this pattern of surplus extraction was prevalent, the cocoa peasantry still received considerable benefit from the production of cocoa as well as the additional income derived from the sale of provision crops.

The cocoa peasantry gained real advantages by producing cocoa for export. Higher incomes among the cocoa peasantry were reflected in the increase of their consumption levels compared to estate laborers. For instance, if a laborer worked every day of the year at approximately 10d. per task, his annual income would be 3,650d. or roughly L16 pounds sterling. With higher income levels the cocoa peasantry were able to increase their household consumption levels. For example, the divergence in levels of consumption between the estate worker and the cocoa peasantry⁴ becomes apparent when incomes are related to the price of selected commodities (See Table 4.2). In view of the stability of commodity prices in Grenada and high prices of cocoa in London, cocoa peasants were able to consume more commodities undoubtedly bettering their social and economic situation.
Table 4.2

Prices for selected articles in Grenada for selected years, 1890-1915

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1905</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1915</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L. d. s.</td>
<td></td>
<td>L. d. s.</td>
<td></td>
<td>L. d. s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flour</td>
<td>1 13 4</td>
<td>1 5 0</td>
<td>1 5 0</td>
<td>1 5 0</td>
<td>1 5 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>0 2 0</td>
<td>0 2 0</td>
<td>0 2 0</td>
<td>0 2 0</td>
<td>0 2 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>0 0 3</td>
<td>0 0 3</td>
<td>0 0 3</td>
<td>0 0 3</td>
<td>2/- 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef</td>
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<td>0 0 7</td>
<td>0 0 7</td>
<td>0 0 7</td>
<td>0 0 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pork</td>
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<td>0 0 6</td>
<td>0 0 6</td>
<td>0 0 6</td>
<td>0 0 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>0 0 5</td>
<td>0 0 4</td>
<td>0 0 4</td>
<td>0 0 4</td>
<td>0 4 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>0 2 0</td>
<td>0 2 0</td>
<td>0 0 1</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0 0 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bluebooks; 1890, 1900, 1910, 1915
The colony was also to experience an increase in the number of individuals paying direct land taxes. In 1890, the local government collected land tax from 7,891 individuals, and by 1895 the number of persons paying direct land taxes had risen to 9,041. In 1895, 8,831 out of the total 9,041 taxpayers were registered as being small landholders (Bluebooks:1890,1895). Although these figures may not be conclusive (as many freeholders did not register their holdings) they provide a feel for the general improvements in the colony.

Another indicator of improvements in the colony was the increase in the number of savings deposits. The first savings institution was established in 1878 in the town of St. George's and was in reach of several rural districts. It remained the only institution on the island until 1887 (Grenada Handbook, 1910:59). The establishment of other institutions and the increases in the number of depositors in every parish point to general improvement in the financial welfare of the colony (See Table 4.3).
Table 4.3

Number of Saving Banks and Depositors in Grenada for selected years, 1885-1898

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th># of Saving banks</th>
<th># Number of depositors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1053</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bluebooks; 1885, 1889, 1893, 1897, and 1898
The Reverend W. Saywell in his testimony to the Royal Commission of 1897 reported that peasants, because of their improved financial situation, were more likely to participate in government and the various institutions of the colony (Report...1897, Grenada, pg.24). Hence, the increase in the number of savings deposits may be viewed as a process of formalization of the peasant economy. Formalization not only represents an incorporation of the peasantry into the wider economy through the production of export crops, but also takes into consideration participation in the colony's institutions (Lele,1975:3). Invariably, such peasant activities suggest an underlying tone of social as well as economic improvement.

VII. A Peasant Cocoa Village in Tamarind Valley

As peasants moved away from plantations in Grenada they established free communities or villages. Village after village sprang up throughout the countryside, many of them taking the name of the estate in the area (Brizan,1984:129). One such prototypical peasant settlement was Tamarind village located on the eastern side of Grenada in the Parish of St. John's. Tamarind is situated at an intermediate altitude between 500 - 700ft. above sea level. The village
occupies low-lying sections of the valley and most peasant houseplots are strung out in a linear pattern along a narrow road which follows the descent of the Black Bay river. Tamarind is hemmed in by two cocoa estates; however, its original settlers were not all former laborers on these estates. Peasants who settled in Tamarind Valley came from all over south central Grenada. Peasant land in Tamarind valley was either purchased from or granted by the estate owners.

In the 1880s and 90s peasant housing in Grenada varied according to the wealth of the individuals. In Tamarind this was no exception. Wealthier individuals inhabited wooden vernacular structures which were roofed with wooden shingles and/or corrugated metal, while those that were less fortunate pieced together their aJoupa (Steele, 1974:10) with mounds of cane grass, pieces of bamboo, scrap lumber and metal. By the late 1890s thatched huts had given way to wood and shingled houses with stables and kitchens (Report... 1897, Grenada, pg. 22). Tamarind’s modest housing actually represented an improvement from the housing found on estates. The Archdeacon of Grenada provided insight on the improvement in peasant living conditions in his testimony to the Royal Commission of 1897. He stated:
The advantage to health of the labourers exchanging dwellings in the crowded villages or in the still more crowded tenements of the sugar estates for houses standing more or less apart in their own grounds must be at once apparent; and the difference of locality would point the same way, for there was the additional change, in the great majority of cases, from the low-lying position of the sugar factories to the breezy and malaria-free slopes of the hillsides. That the labourers' health was greatly improved by this migration I have no doubt at all (Report...Royal Commission 1897: App.C, Part III. Grenada, pg.29)

In fact, there was a general increase in the number of peasant houses throughout the island. In 1891, it was reported that there was a 20 percent increase in rural houses from the year 1881 (Census,1891). In 1897 there were 7,808 houses registered as belonging to small proprietors and by 1900 there were 8,734 (C.O.321/196). There is little doubt that peasant housing conditions in Tamarind represented an improvement from estate housing6.

By 1890, most villagers had obtained land and were benefiting from freehold tenure. Peasant holdings and land use in the village were typical of peasant land throughout the island. Village land holdings were small and fragmented. Holdings varied in size from 0.5 to 7 acres of land. Furthermore, villagers held a houseplot on which provisions were cultivated and also a piece of land where cocoa was cultivated. Although restricted by their small holdings,
villagers adapted a variety of intensive uses for their land. Brierley's "kitchen garden" provides insight:

...Small patches of land, an acre or less in extent (0.4 hectares or less), are cropped more or less permanently throughout the year. A varied assortment of root crops, vegetables, and fruit trees are grown, providing rural inhabitants with a convenient supply of foodstuffs commonly found in the daily diet. A few yard fowl are the source of eggs and meat. ...bananas, plantains, citrus, breadfruit, coconuts, maize, cane, red peas, beans, tomatoes, pumpkins, okra, yams, cocos, Irish potatoes and cassava may all be growing together on the few yards of soil (1991:19).

The outstanding socioeconomic feature of the "Kitchen garden" is its space-saving attributes. Furthermore, it provides us with a better understanding of peasant self-reliance and innovation to their marginal position.

As aforementioned, (Section IV) cultivation practices of Grenadian peasants lend themselves to the cultivation of provision crops. In fact, village cocoa plots resembled a Food Forest. The Food Forest is:

ideally a sophisticated agronomic device, varying according to physical, biological, social and economic conditions and comprising a variety of crops, in number, anywhere from 6 to 60 different species, of different height, physiognomy and root characteristics which are spatially, temporally and numerically organized in such a way that they will ecologically benefit each other and the whole...(Hill and Iton, 1982:2).
The significance of this conceptual model is that it allows us to understand how intense cultivation techniques allowed Tamarind villagers to plant food crops while pursuing the cultivation of tree crops -- particularly perennials like cocoa. Although cocoa was grown in stands, food trees and crops were found throughout the fields. Dasheen and tannia grew well in drains, while crops like tomato, cabbage, lettuce, peppers, peas and corn were planted in clusters around the plot of cocoa. It was also common to find papaya, mango, breadfruit, citrus, avocado pear and cashew trees dispersed throughout peasant cocoa plots. A diversified agricultural base provided villagers with numerous social and economic advantages and was a valuable adaptation which allowed the villagers to experience higher yields, lower risks, and greater independence from the market.

In Tamarind, there existed a system of village reciprocity whereby villagers pooled their labor in times of need. Villagers helped each other during both the planting and harvesting of food and cash crops. Although the establishment of a cocoa plot required little capital outlay, it required a great deal of attention and labor. To maintain good yields, a cocoa plot required weeding, pruning, mulching, liming, and clearing of drainage systems.
Brushing or weeding was required at least two or three times a year since weeds interfered with the growth of the plants and consequently reduced yields. Peasants would clear a 4 foot radius of ground around the cocoa tree with a small cutlass. Once the weeds were cut peasants mulched or forked them into the ground. This was usually performed during the dry season in February or March. The decomposing matter functioned as an organic fertilizer (Pound, 1938:19). Pruning was necessary two or three times a year as the cutting of chupons or suckers allowed the tree to grow tall. Pruning also facilitated the harvest of pods. Trees were cut in a symmetrical shape to prevent the interlacing of branches (Pound, 1938:19).

Cocoa farmers of Tamarind introduced several inputs into their fields, one of them being lime. The introduction of lime usually preceded forking (Pound, 1938:19) and was used to decrease acidity levels in the soil. Lower acidity levels in the soil allowed important nutrients to be released which facilitated plant growth. A farmer explains that lime was also used for other purposes:

Lime comes from the sea - it is coral -- the coral is burnt over a pit on top of the Chinese plum tree -- once its is burnt and all the ashes falls into the pit -- it is gathered and used on the cocoa -- we then put it on areas of the land that was holding water-- the lime loosens the soil so it can drain (Personal Interview, June 18:1992).
It is necessary to note that lime was an important commodity in the village. It was sometimes used to barter for other goods or sold for cash. Lime represented an important source of additional income for villagers.

Villagers also introduced organic manure into their fields. In fact, livestock were an important part of village life. The application of organic manure helped replenish the soil. Cattle were the most important animals; however, manure from donkeys, goats, sheep and even fowl were utilized. Peasants used the pen patch system whereby the cow was tied to a stake on a marginal area of the plot. Once the manure accumulated it was then applied throughout the field. "It has been estimated that a well bedded cow can produce as much as 16 tons of manure per annum" (Pound, 1938:19). Animals were shared among villagers. One farmer explains:

If I had a cow and I done manure my land and if somebody in need of manure -- I give my cow to the man. As long as he feed and keep my cow he keep the manure" (Personal Interview, June 10:1992).

Cows were also used for meat as well as providing a source of emergency capital on which the family could draw in times of need.
Cocoa, a seasonal crop, put a seasonal demand on village labor. There were two important harvests during the year. The main crop occurred in late November and continued until early February. The second crop started in March and continued until April and a less important subsidiary crop occurred in August. Men, women and children all contributed during the harvest. The more laborious task of picking the cocoa was performed by the men in the village. Men carefully removed mature cocoa pods from the trees with a sharp cocoa knife (Goulet) or a small cutlass. Farmers were sure not to damage the growing point of the pod to assure growth in the next year. The cut pods were gathered by women and children and placed in heaps under the trees. Women and children were also responsible for opening the ripe pods. The pods were opened with a small worn down cutlass. The wet beans, which were surrounded by a pulp, were then placed in a small wicker "cocoa basket" which was matted with freshly cut banana leaves. This process of gathering and breaking open of pods was known as "samble".

The wet cocoa beans were now ready for fermentation. Fermentation refers to the process where the pulp around the bean starts to break down. The chemical changes that occur in the pulp cause the beans to "sweat" (Wood and Lass, 1985: 453). Sweating refers to the release of a syrup-like
substance that runs off during the fermentation process. During this process the beans turn from an off white to a golden brown color. Tamarind villagers utilized two methods that are virtually nonexistent today. One villager explained that the methods utilized depended on the wealth of the individual. On the more prosperous farms, one would find the "cocoa house", while on the less prosperous farms, farmers used a "cocoa mat" or basket for fermentation.

Cocoa houses were small wooden or galvanized structures usually constructed from scraps of gathered building materials. These small structures were usually big enough to cover a wooden board that ranged from 6 to 8 square feet. During fermentation the wet cocoa beans were placed on the board and then covered with banana trash or leaves. The board was then rolled back into the house and the beans were left to "sweat" for approximately eight days. After this period the beans were exposed to the sun. The drying process took approximately five days depending on the atmospheric conditions. Farmers were careful not to allow rain on the beans.

The other method utilized by Tamarind villagers was the "cocoa mat" which was constructed from the stem of the leaves of the Balisier (Heliconia) plant. The stems were
laid out and dried and then fastened together with twine. This mat took on a wooden-like appearance when dried. The mat was usually kept under the house to protect the cocoa from the elements. The fermentation process is similar to the one described above, however, the cocoa mat method usually heated the beans unevenly. As a result, beans were "transhipped" or moved around to make sure the sweating would occur more evenly. The utilization of the cocoa house and the cocoa mat serve as a prime examples of peasant innovation.

After the beans were dried villagers gathered to help each other remove the "gut" or the white film residue from the cocoa beans. Polishing was performed to enhance the appearance of the beans. Beans must be "pretty", as the better looking beans often fetched a higher price from cocoa dealers. The process was known as "dancing the cocoa". In this process beans were usually laid out in mounds on either a mat, a piece of wood, or a copper. Villagers poured water over the beans and then walked on and shuffled through them. Sometimes chipped green cocoa pods or cooking oil were added to the water to give the beans an added glossy appearance. "Dancing the cocoa" was a very important social event for the village. A farmer explains,
Dancing was a time of fun. Men, women, and children would all participate. There would be singing while people were dancing through the cocoa. -- sometimes we would drink a little white rum (Personal Interview, June 13:1992).

While the beans were danced the "gut" was collected on the villagers feet. After the "gut" had been removed, the polished beans were let to dry for a day or two and then sold to cocoa dealers or transported to market.

The high degree of social interaction during the cultivation of cocoa helped to foster a sense of social cohesion among the villagers of Tamarind. This type of behavior did not go unnoticed by government officials. In 1899 Governor Moloney reported to the Colonial Office that a pleasant characteristic of Grenadian peasantry was their readiness with which they cooperate in helping one another in any task requiring united effort (C.O./321/187). An example of group solidarity in Tamarind village was the formation of a peasant association in the early 1900s (See Appendix 1.3.). This type of organization represented a responsiveness to community as well as a concern for their social and economic advancement. These concerted efforts in cocoa cultivation reinforced a sense of solidarity which made villagers more aware of their position in the wider agrarian structure.
The Archdeacon of Grenada’s report to the Royal Commission of 1897 provides insight on how peasant perceptions toward their role in society began to change. He stated,

[peasant] ownership of land and his improved circumstances brought him into business touch with men of higher social position, and he realized the importance for his children of education which he himself lacked, and the greater beauty of social position and more refined surroundings, (Report... West India Commission of 1897, App. C., Vol. III).

Hence, with freehold tenure and a secure cocoa market cocoa peasants of Tamarind village undoubtedly improved their financial situation. By controlling and cultivating land the peasantry actually became part of that particular sphere. Peasants sought to excel by realizing that they had more to do than perform a task through compulsion or for the sake of maintaining an existence (Report...1897, Grenada, pg. 25). The freehold cultivation of cocoa undoubtedly came to be perceived as a way to improve ones social position in society. Hence, in many ways cocoa contributed to their sense of understanding of their surroundings and their status.

As a result, education began to be viewed as a vehicle of upward social mobility. There was an increasing tendency among villagers to pursue vigorously the education of their youth. Reverend W. Saywell testified before the 1897
Commission that the peasantry appreciate education for their children and will pay for it, as much as 3d. per week (Report...1897, Grenada, pg 25). An elementary school was soon established in Tamarind Junction. In fact, Grenada experienced an increase in the number of schools as well as in the number of students in the late nineteenth century. In 1878, there were 3,421, or 8% of the total population enrolled in the island's 31 primary schools (Brizan, 1984:158). This was a 60% increase in the number of students from 1862 to 1878. The peasantry continued to participate in primary education. In 1896 there were 4,000 more students enrolled in schools than were enrolled in 1883 (Report... 1897, Grenada). The tendency among the villagers of Tamarind to make themselves and their children accessible to churches and schools must be viewed as an attempt to secure the skills necessary for an independent existence.

The historical reconstruction of the prototypical peasant village in Tamarind valley throws light on the socio-economic improvements experienced by the cocoa peasantry. Moreover, it provides a setting in which to understand how cocoa helped to transform rural society in Grenada. As peasants exploited their agricultural niche they were able to accumulate significant capital which facilitated a greater sense of self-respect and self-
reliance. Rising incomes did not interfere with the growing sense of community and collective action.

This chapter has sought to examine the origins of an independent peasantry and their involvement in the expansion of cocoa. The significance of the metayage system goes far beyond a reorganization of labor relations. Its application on cocoa estates during the latter half of the nineteenth century provided peasants with unique opportunities for the acquisition of land. Land represented more than survival to the cocoa peasantry; it gave them a stake in the colony’s resources and a chance to improve their plight. The combination of low capital inputs, adaptive cultivation techniques, and an environment favorable for the cultivation of cocoa allowed the cocoa peasantry to develop into a dynamic self-sustaining rural form.
End Notes

1. In this discussion, a peasant will be referred to any person holding and controlling not more than ten acres of land and who produce commodities for sale as well as for home consumption.

2. The data introduced in the formula were derived from surveys conducted in Grenada during the summer of 1992 and represents averages of figures gathered during field research and interviews with elderly cocoa farmers.

3. This conservative estimate of 1/2 of the surplus being extracted from the peasantry is again based on interviews conducted during fieldwork in Grenada. Also there is an indication in Appendix 1.3 that farmers received 3d. per pound instead the London price of 5d. per pound. The London price for a cwt. of cocoa in 1903 ranged from 48s. to 53s. Thus the cocoa peasantry received approximately half of the economic benefit of their labor.

4. Mintz (1974) tells us that Caribbean rural folk may be divided roughly into rural proletarians, who continued to work on the plantations; peasants, who have access to land and produce their own food and market commodities; and people who fall in between the rural proletariat and the peasantry, and generally work on their own and engage in wage labor.

5. Tamarind Village is a hybrid model that was derived from primary and secondary sources as well as personal interviews.

6. Better housing conditions during this time period 1870-1917 led to improved health conditions which resulted in population increases. In fact, the population of Grenada increased from 42,403 to 66,302 during 1870-1917 (Harewood:1966)

7. This discussion does not suggest that all freedmen in Grenada owned, controlled or had access to land.(See Note #4)

8. Numerous peasants associations emerged throughout the anglophone Caribbean in the 1900s. There was a growing tendency among peasants and working classes to organize in attempt to define their freedom (Hart,1988:43). The specific purpose of the association discussed in Appendix 1.3 was to appeal to the Government for regulation on the unjust usury practices.
Chapter Five

The Grenadian Anomaly: Prosperity Not Realized, 1870-1917
I. Introduction

Responding to the outbreak of several incidents of civil unrest in the region, the Colonial Office in London dispatched a commission to inquire into the state of Her Majesty’s West India colonies. The Royal West India Commission of 1897 found the development of the region stifled by a loss of revenues resulting from the "bounty depression" in the late nineteenth century. Economic decline in the region, they emphasized, was due to a high dependence on one export staple, sugar. However, the commissioners found the economic situation in the region to be comparative and that Grenada had been spared the disastrous consequences of the "bounty depression" (Report ... 1897:7). They attributed the Grenadian situation to its agricultural transformation from sugar to cocoa. This was not surprising as by 1896 sugar exports had diminished, while those of cocoa were valued at £205,082 pounds sterling.

The Commission emphasized that Grenada’s condition was quite healthy due to the existence of a large class of small proprietors. In fact, Grenada was held as a prime example of the overall benefits of peasant freeholds. The 1897
Commission maintained that employment in the colony was more general with as many as half of the adult population engaged directly in agricultural pursuits. There is little doubt that the conditions in Grenada were anomalous to the region. Export revenues had increased the circulation of money and brought prosperity to an industrious peasantry whose position was infinitely better than that of those who had remained on estates. In fact, at this time Grenada had a greater amount of small holders than St. Vincent and St. Lucia combined. (See Table 5.1).

Nevertheless, these developments were short lived as Grenada fell into a depression by the 1920s despite all the achievements made by the cocoa peasantry. Both the Sugar Commission (1929-1930) and the Moyne Commission of 1939 drew attention to the deterioration in the general welfare of the colony. This chapter attempts to explain why Grenada experienced economic decline following a period of relative prosperity. The discussion which ensues explores how Grenada’s specialization on cocoa limited the development of other sources of income making the colony highly susceptible to market changes and ecological catastrophes in the early part of the twentieth century.
Table 5.1

Number and Size of Land Holdings for St. Vincent, St. Lucia and Grenada for the Year 1897

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colony</th>
<th>&lt;5ac.</th>
<th>5-10ac.</th>
<th>10-20ac.</th>
<th>20-50ac.</th>
<th>50-100ac.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Vincent</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Lucia</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td>5600</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Royal West India Commission (1897): Report of The Royal West India Commission of 1897, Part III, VI, VII, and VIII.
II. Prosperity Not Realized 1870-1917

By the 1920s Grenada's cocoa industry was in a state of disarray. Although economic distress in the colony may be attributed to the disruption of trade during World War I (1914-1919), its faltering economic position was unmistakably caused by a reduction of cocoa production. Cocoa trees, that were planted in the 1870s-80s, were beginning to die off resulting in declining yields and inevitably to crops of poorer quality. Furthermore, unfavorable weather conditions hampered Grenada's cocoa crop. In 1911, severe storms occurred on September 24 and 25 and brought damage to the island's roads and cocoa fields (Grenada Handbook, 1946:71). The heavy rains eroded hillsides and washed nutrients away from mountain cocoa fields leaving the soil exhausted and infertile. Farmers were faced with increasing costs of production as they had to purchase additional fertilizer (organic or artificial) and/or rehabilitate their fields.

Another factor contributing to the decline of cocoa production was the interplanting of nutmegs in cocoa fields. In response to the high prices, the Government encouraged the cultivation of nutmegs in an attempt to diversify the island's agricultural base. In 1914, the estimated London
price for nutmegs was 53s. 3d. per cwt. compared to 41s. per cwt. for cocoa (P.P. 1920/ XXXII/289). Between 1913 and 1920, farmers planted nutmeg trees on lands where aging cocoa plants had died off. Nutmegs soon outgrew cocoa plants and caused an appreciable decrease in the island’s cocoa output. As a result, Grenadian cocoa yields were reduced by as much as 18% between 1910-1920, while nutmeg production increased from 1,674,276lbs in 1914 to 2,098,364 in 1918 (de Verteuil, 1927 :104; P.P. 1920/XXXII/289).

In addition to the declining production of cocoa, the world cocoa market was changing. High cocoa prices between 1900-1910 combined with an expansion of world consumption attracted many new growers (See Appendix 1.2). World cocoa production increased dramatically and rose from an average of 228,000 tons during a five-year period 1909-1913, to 394,000 tons in 1921. (Shephard cited in Harrison,1988:71). Increases in world production were primarily due to the development of industries in West Africa. Great progress had been made by Nigeria, the Gold Coast, the Ivory Coast, Cameroon and San Thome (Van Hall,1932:11). In 1921, Ghana produced 134,000 tons of cocoa accounting for nearly 34 percent of world cocoa production (West India Committee Circular,1927: 67).
A great majority of the new countries that entered the world cocoa market produced 'ordinary' varieties of cocoa. As a result, the world market became divided roughly into two categories, namely, those countries producing fine flavored cocoa or "criollo" types and those producing ordinary base-grade cocoa or "forestero" types (Shephard, 1932:3). Fine cocoa was distinguished in London markets by its rich flavor and its better quality bean. As a result, Grenada and other 'fine' cocoa producers enjoyed superior prices. Between the years 1910-1920, West Indian cocoa fetched the highest price in the world market. The price of West Indian cocoa during this period averaged 60s. per cwt., while Accra cocoa averaged 45s. per cwt. (West Indian Committee Circular, 1927:67; Shephard, 1932:6).

Although Grenadian cocoa was of the finest flavored quality, the relative importance of 'fine' cocoa was beginning to decline. In the 1890s, 'fine' types accounted for four-fifths of the total world production; however, by the 1920s fine types accounted for only one-fifth of the world's production (Shephard, 1932:3). Shepherd tells us that, in contrast to the 1890s, 'fine' types no longer constituted the basis of the cacao products, but were added, in small quantities only, to improve the flavor of 'ordinary' types (Shephard cited in Harrison, 1988:71).
Grenada's overall importance in the world cocoa market thus declined. In 1895, Grenada accounted for 11% of world production, whereas in 1920 Grenada produced only 1.3% of the world's supply (Van Hall, 1932:11; Hess, 1991:160; Shephard, 1932:4). Furthermore, both 'ordinary' and 'fine' cocoa prices dropped tremendously in 1920. Milstead attributes the decline of cocoa prices to a world-wide deflation following the end of World War I (Milstead, 1940:201). In 1919, the price of Grenadian cocoa averaged an astounding 130s. per cwt., while Accra cocoa averaged 81s. 6d. per cwt. (Shephard, 1932:6; Grenada Handbook, 1946:76). However, in 1921 the price of West Indian cocoa had dropped to 57s. per cwt. and that of Accra had decreased to 43s. 6d. per cwt. (Shephard, 1932:5). These changes undoubtedly put pressure on a majority of Grenada's populace. In 1920 cocoa contributed 77.4% of the total value of all exports from Grenada (Milstead, 1940:201).

Conditions in the colony were made worse in 1921 when a severe hurricane visited the colony. Heavy winds and rains devastated cocoa trees, decreasing the island's cocoa production by as much as 12 percent (de Verteuil, 1927:65). In 1920 cocoa production was 13,803,480 lbs. and just one year later total production had declined to 9,599,940 lbs.
(Hess, 1991:160). The hurricane not only destroyed the island's cocoa crop, but brought havoc to much of the Grenadian countryside. The high winds had leveled homes and villages displacing many of the island's inhabitants. The hurricane only exacerbated the already depressed economic conditions in the colony (Grenada Handbook, 1946:80).

The Grenadian cocoa peasantry and their families were undoubtedly hit the hardest by these events. The cocoa peasantry who had acquired plots of land large enough to achieve a greater degree of independence (and consequently a much higher standard of living than those who remained on the estates) still found their livelihood linked and highly dependent on the world economy. Peasants had become increasingly reliant on food imports and subsequently on a cash economy. Rising cocoa peasant incomes had fostered a preference for imported foods such as salted cod, rice and wheat flour. (Grenada Handbook, 1946:73). These changes in local food preferences had an adverse affect on domestic food production. Peasants concentrated on the production of export crops at the expense of local 'traditional' starchy staples like dasheen, yams and tannia. In times of boom (1870-1917) the peasantry had prospered, but when prices cocoa fell in the 1920s the gains made by the peasantry dwindled.
Lower cocoa prices and unfavorable market conditions worked to restrict peasant economic activities. Peasants lacked adequate access to credit and capital markets. Cocoa peasants had no other choice but to rely almost exclusively on their limited savings or on loans that they obtained from usurious cocoa dealers. As a consequence many peasants were unable to pursue the proper cultural practices necessary to maintain their cocoa fields. Poor cultural practices led to a deterioration of fields which further reduced output and consequently income levels. As a result, many peasants were forced to forfeit their land either to the government or to cocoa dealers.²

Grenada’s increasing population began to put pressure on the limited resource base of cocoa peasants (Brierley, 1988b:64). Marginal lands which had afforded peasants with unique opportunities for cocoa cultivation had limited absorptive capacity in view of the island’s growing population (Beckford, 1985:404). The expansion of population exhausted soils and led to a tendency toward smaller farms resulting in an under utilization of labor (Marshall, 1972:49). Following the decline of cocoa prices, the cocoa peasantry had few options but to consume the few provisions they produced as lower wage rates on estates combined with
increasing food imports led to a depression in local provision markets.

III. Discussion: The Future as History

What this study reveals is that the socioeconomic position of the Grenadian peasantry has varied over time in accordance with the changing fortunes of the colony's export crops. The peasantry emerges in Grenada at a time when the plantations, restricted by a lack of capital, had no other option than to introduce the metayage system to reduce labor costs. The resulting prosperity was experienced during a period when Grenada entered a new commodity market following its agricultural transformation from sugar to cocoa. Peasant prosperity hinged on the fact that Grenadian cocoa fetched the highest price in the world market. Thus when local production began to suffer and the world market changed we begin to notice that the position of the peasantry was unmistakably connected to the island's faltering cocoa trade. Hence, the problems that peasants faced pay testimony that Grenada's economy continued to be based on one basic economic assumption: that world demand for a staple will grow with world production for that staple (Wallerstein, 1984:99).
History suggests that the Grenadian peasantry, despite their gains and prosperity during the latter half of the 19th century, remained intricately linked to external market conditions. However brief, this period reveals that the island’s prosperity hinged on the contribution of the cocoa peasantry. Furthermore, this phenomenon highlights the importance of the small farmer to agricultural development and suggests that Caribbean peasants are not merely ‘cast off social products’ of a larger history but are indeed capable of indigenous adaptations and innovations. Therefore, it is not surprising that W.A. Lewis, in his Colonial Office pamphlet, did not hesitate to state that the economic situation of the Grenadian peasantry during the period from the 1870s right up to the war was so prosperous that peasants were "tempted to extravagance" (Lewis, 1936:18).
End Notes

1. Riots were occurring throughout the region, in Trinidad (1884), Grenada (1885), St. Vincent (1891), Dominica (1893) and St. Kitts and British Guiana (1896). The riots that occurred in Grenada on November 5, 1885 were over the banning of a customary throwing of fireballs in the market square (Richardson, 1992c:7)

2. The high rate of peasant encumberance was caused by inability to pay mortgages which occurred as a direct result of the fall in the price of cocoa. Many peasants were unable to pay back the loans they had acquired. Money was borrowed from either the Government or by cocoa dealers who advanced them annual payments for a share of their crop (Report ... Royal Commission of 1897, App. C., Vol III, pg. 20).

3. This phrase is borrowed from George Beckford (1979): "Plantations, peasants and proletariat in the West Indies: in Berdichewsky, Bernard. Anthropology and Social Change in Rural Areas, Mouton, The Hague, 347 -361."
Appendix
Appendix 1.1. Wholesale Prices for Muscovado Sugar in London, 1800-1900 (shillings/cwt.)

Appendix 1.2. Range of Prices of Grenada Cocoa in London on January 1, 1882-1912 (shillings/cwt).

Appendix 1.3 Peasant Petition to Legislative Council, 1904

To His Excellency Sir R. b. Llewelyn, K.C.M.G, Governor and Commander in Chief of Grenada and its Dependencies etc.

The humble petition of the residents and taxpayers of the villages of Concord, Marigot and Grand Roy and Mon Plaisir represents to Your Excellency

1. That your Petitioners are peasant proprietors who are subjected to very unfavorable circumstances in our agricultural life. Our crops have been steadily diminishing in consequence of the deterioration of our holdings, which has been brought about principally by financial tyranny under which we groan.

2. That the charges and exactions imposed by moneylenders are to our minds unjust, and are baffling our efforts to improve our condition. We are charged 8 percent for our loans - this charge is made up half yearly, in some instances quarterly - and is charged too upon the current account. We are paying interest upon interest. About three years ago a charge term commission in lieu of produce was introduced and forced upon us. In addition we cannot get fair prices for our cocoa from money lenders who give us as
a rule 3 1/2d. lb. instead of 4 1/2 and 5 d. - The ordinary prices in the island for dry cocoa. We are not free to take our cocoa elsewhere nor to resist these unjust exactions; if we do, immediate payment of our accounts is demanded and the power of the law with its heavy expenses is brought to bear upon us and crush us. The demands as money lenders may be summed up as follows:

8% Interest
2 1/2 Commission
Loss of 1d. to 1 1/2d. per lb. on cocoa.

These added together raise the interest to 13% to 15% on our loans and even higher. Moreover we have to pay freight, porterage and jetty due on the cocoa we are forced to take to Gouyave - formerly these charges were met by the money lenders. Very often too, we are forced to incur great and heavy law expenses. After having given our title-deeds as security for our debts we are driven to give judgements which cost us much and they give the power of dispossessing us at will without any notice to pay off our accounts. How heavy these law expenses are can be gathered from the following instances:-
Debt Judgement and other expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Debt</th>
<th>Judgement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cordelia Burke</td>
<td>L18. 0. 0.</td>
<td>L11. 16. 0.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell Cadore</td>
<td></td>
<td>7. 16. 0.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Grant</td>
<td></td>
<td>5. 0. 4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosetta Anotoine</td>
<td>L60. 0. 0.</td>
<td>5. 6. 0.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beau Baptiste</td>
<td>L105. 0.0.</td>
<td>8. 1. 0.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These injustices are driving us fast to ruin, poverty and misery. Whilst all these charges and expenses are increasing we dare not ask for better prices which money lenders can reasonably afford, but will not give because they know we are unable to raise loans under better advantages. The manuring and attention our holdings require we are unable to give, by reason of the heavy mill-stone on our labour.

3. That we are now actually threatened with ruin. We are being called upon to pay off our account in the manner to revolt the feelings of an English community. One of the Money Lenders has recently purchased the remnant of the Concord estate. His Desire appears to be to re-attach many of the holdings that were formerly belonging to the estate, but are now the holdings of the settlers of Concord valley. To achieve this, he is demanding now immediate payment of
the accounts of his debtors whose holdings are adjacent to the Estate. He has requested some to dispose of their holdings to him. A poor widow was only a few weeks ago pressed to yield to his wish. On refusing at first, her residence was put up for sale and the only way she could save it was to yield to this tyrannous demand. Her 3 1/2 acres of land (full bearing cocoa) were thus dragged out of her possession, and at a price that was not fair. It is common talk that soon we shall all be made beggars, for the lands must pass into the hands of a few wealthy men. This threat is being realized in these villages. The peasants, ignorant and unfortunate, are fleeing districts. whole families from here left and are leaving the Colony. We cannot raise money to pay our accounts without incurring heavy expenses which we cannot safely take upon ourselves; and if we did raise fresh loans, the conditions would be equally ruinous. When our holding are put up for sale, they are bought by money lenders themselves for below the real estate value and then resold privately for high prices. In many cases this seems to form the object of the pressure brought to bear upon us and the lingering and postponement of the sales. We beg to quote a few instance of very recent sales.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Valued at</th>
<th>Sold for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cordelia Burke</td>
<td>L25</td>
<td>L8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis Marrast</td>
<td>L500</td>
<td>L370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Modeste</td>
<td>L130</td>
<td>L95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These are not mountain lands, but choice spots in the valleys. Your Excellency will, we feel sure, see that we have just cause to appeal for your powerful protection. We are sons of the soil. Our fathers by their toil, brought Grenada to what she is and saved her from the great financial depression a few years ago. when the other West Indian colonies had to be pitied and helped by the imperial Government. We are not unworthy sons of our fathers in the agricultural arena but adverse circumstances which we cannot control are unnerving us, and we are undoing the good which our fathers, and we in later years have done. We have struggled hard against these adverse circumstances, but we need powerful assistance to tide over them. We look around and we cannot expect any succour from our troubles but from you and our Government. Our toil has built the finance of this colony. Our toil has made Grenada a choice spot in the West Indies; and it is certain that our that our loss and failure shall be the Government’s loss and failure.
4. We therefore respectfully beg your excellency to give us help similar to that which you have given to the people of Cardiac. You have not in this case to buy estates from unwilling owners, for we hold them and will willingly place our title-deeds in your hands as security.

But if this cannot be done we beg your excellency to give us the help generally extended to the large proprietors when they are engulfed in financial difficulties. Or at least to guarantee for us a loan and allow us to pay it off in annual instalments, spreading say from 10 to 12 1/2 years on terms similar to those adopted by English building societies. Considering that money is loaned in the island at 6% we feel sure that such annual instalments could not amount to as much as what we are unjustly paying. With the safety of our holdings thus secured we could and would improve our holdings by manuring and careful cultivation for we should feel we were working for ourselves and our prosperity, and not as now to put money into the pockets of unscrupulous money-lenders, who hold these judgements over our heads and hamper us in the matter of fair price for our cocoa.

Anticipating that the report of our appeal to you may invoke upon us more bitter and greater pressure from the money-lenders than we are now under, we beg your excellency for
immediate protection from any severity which we might be placed under; and so grant to your humble petitioners help and relief, which cannot fail to materially advance the general prosperity of the colony.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray etc.

(Sd.) Freeling Joseph Louison and 105 others

Oct. 6/1904
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Note Abbreviations:


P.P. Parliament, House of Commons, Parliamentary Papers


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